



N. Gavrilov

■  
**National  
Liberation  
Movement  
in West  
Africa**  
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Chapter 1

**STRUGGLE  
OF WEST AFRICAN  
PEOPLES AGAINST  
FRENCH  
COLONIALISM**

**Invasion  
of West Africa  
by Colonialists**

West Africa has long attracted the attention of avaricious European merchants. The gold, slave and ivory trade has brought them fabulous profits. To help this trade, the European powers began to build fortified trading posts on the West African coast in the second half of the 15th century. The first of these posts—Fort San Georgi da Mina on the Gold Coast—was founded by order of Portuguese King John II as far back as 1482. The English and French soon followed suit. By the middle of last century Britain seized four small colonies on the West African coast—Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Lagos; France set up several strong points in the mouth of the Senegal and on the Ivory Coast. Portugal retained the mouth of the Corubal (Rio Grande).

At first serving as bases for the protection of European trade with Africa these territories were subsequently transformed into springboards from



which Western powers began their conquest of the "Black Continent".

Wars of conquest were waged on a particularly large scale in the last quarter of the 19th century. They were not accidental. By that time capitalism in Europe and North America began to change qualitatively. Free competition was superseded by capitalist monopoly. Associations of major manufacturers appeared and fought each other for markets and profits. The advantages were primarily on the side of those who had sources of cheap raw materials. In their search for raw materials monopolists more and more often turned their attention to Africa, for legends were being told of its wealth. "The more capitalism is developed, the more strongly the shortage of raw materials is felt, the more intense the competition and the hunt for sources of raw materials throughout the whole world, the more desperate the struggle for the acquisition of colonies."\* Lenin thus described the world situation at the turn of the 20th century.

But acquisition of sources of raw materials was not the only aim of seizing colonies. No small part was also played by the striving of each of the powers to secure general economic and military-strategic advantages.

France, Britain, Germany and Portugal participated in the division of West Africa. For some reasons the French imperialists managed to seize

the largest territory in this part of the continent. The area of West Africa\* is about 5.5 million sq km; 4.35 million sq km or 79 per cent of this territory was occupied by France.

This book will deal with the national liberation movement taking place on these former French territories of West Africa.

Many works on the "colonial epopée" that have been published in the West allege that the African people accepted the French guardianship voluntarily and received the conquerors with almost open arms. This is a lie from beginning to end and is aimed at justifying the unjust, robber wars. The French colonialists subjugated Africa with fire and sword, reducing villages to ashes and leaving blood and corpses in their wake.

At the time colonial invasion of West Africa began there were several independent states there: Cayor (on the territory of present-day Senegal), Fouta-Djalou (on the territory of the Guinea Republic), Ahmadou Empire stretching to the middle reaches of the Niger (Segou Region) and covering the areas between the Bafing and Bakhoi rivers all the way to Dinguiraye. A strong military state existed in the Sikasso Region. A vast Ouassoulou Empire arose in West Africa in 1870-75. It covered the territory from the upper reaches of the Niger in the west to the Sikasso Kingdom in the east, and from Dinguiraye and

\* This area includes the countries of former French West Africa, so-called Portuguese Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Togo and Nigeria.

\* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 260.



Fouta-Djalou in the north to the wooded borders of Sierra Leone and Liberia in the south. There was a kingdom with a centre in the city of Kong on the territory of the present-day Ivory Coast. Dahomey was a flourishing state. There were also other state formations of lesser significance.

Almost all West African states were finally seized and destroyed by the French colonialists, but not one of them submitted to the conquerors voluntarily. The invaders met with strong resistance everywhere. The Ouolof, Tukulor, Bambara and Malinke peoples offered particularly stubborn resistance.

French colonial troops began their invasion of the territory of the present Mali Republic at the end of the 1850s, but launched large-scale military operations later, about 1880. The French troops had to fight a long war against the Ahmadou state. In 1890 they paid a very dear price for the capture of the city of Segou. The defenders of the city inflicted enormous losses on the enemy. Bitter fighting took place for the cities of Djenne and Bandiagara.

The French troops suffered serious defeat near Timbuktu in 1893. At first the French took the city, but were later driven out of it by detachments of Tuaregs. In January 1894 Tuaregs destroyed a whole column of French troops commanded by Colonel Bonnier. The French had to exert considerable efforts to recover the positions lost in that area.

In 1898 the colonialists managed to capture in

bitter fighting the city of Sikasso numbering 40,000 population. The defenders of the city with Chief Ba Bemba at their head wrote another glorious page in the history of African resistance.

In 1891 the colonialists activated their operations against the Ouassoulou Empire which covered mainly the area of present-day Mali and Guinea. Samory Touré, the head of the empire, prominent statesman and talented general, proved a stronger opponent than did Ahmadou. Samory Touré had under his command an army 15,000 strong and hardly differing from the regular French troops. Samory's soldiers wore a uniform (hat, jacket and yellow trousers). Many of them were armed with rapid-firing guns. The French historian A.E.A. Baratier wrote: "Brave, energetic and possessing the gift of a leader Samory was unflinchingly staunch and never lost courage under any circumstances."\*

Samory's regiments fought the French colonial army for almost 25 years. Displaying exceptional courage and selflessness the soldiers, mostly Malinkes, inflicted many severe defeats on the French units.

Only in 1898 with the aid of several traitors did the colonialists succeed in taking Samory—this unbending champion of the freedom of African peoples—prisoner. He was banished to one of the islands on the Ogooué River where he died two years later.

\* A.E.A. Baratier, *A Travers l'Afrique*, Paris, 1912, p. 49.



History has brought down to us the names of other heroes, besides Samory, who courageously, selflessly and at the peril of their own lives defended the freedom of Africa. During the siege of the city of Ouossébougou, one of the large centres of the Ahmadou Empire, Chief Bandougou Diara preferred death to shameful captivity. At the last moment he ordered that he and his relatives should be blown up. But the fighting continued even after his death. J. Suret-Canale, progressive French historian, wrote: "The Africans fought for every hut. Men and women resisted the invaders to the last breath. Nobody surrendered in Ouossébougou. The massacre was so terrible that the French officers did not even count the dead."\* There were many such people as Bandougou Diara.

In describing the aggressive campaigns in West Africa many French historians tried to portray the African leaders as "bloody tyrants", "barbarians" and "slave-traders".

Depicting the imaginary "atrocities" of the leaders of African resistance unconscientious historians pursued the one main aim of showing the French officers to the best advantage, of representing them as bearers of progress who presumably delivered Africa from "age-old evil" and brought it within reach of some sort of "higher civilisation".

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\* Jean Suret-Canale, *Afrique Noire Occidentale et Centrale*, Paris, 1958, p. 209.

In reality, however, the "bloody tyrants" were the very "bearers of progress", the French colonels and generals under whose leadership West Africa was conquered. Here is how the capture of the city of Sikasso by the colonial troops was described by a French officer who took part in the events: "The siege was followed by an assault. An order to plunder was given. All foes were captured or killed. The prisoners, about 4,000, were crowded together. The colonel started dividing the loot. Each European received a woman of his choice. On the way back 40-km marches were made, the prisoners being dragged along. The children and all who became exhausted were bayoneted to death or finished off with rifle butts."\* This testimony was taken from Vigné d'Octon's book *La Gloire du sabre* published in Paris in 1900. Many descriptions of such "feats" performed by French soldiers can be found. The colonial army often devastated whole regions without any military necessity, "for prophylactic purposes", as the French officers put it. But in the reports sent to Paris these "prophylactic measures" were described as stubborn battles fought for many days with a "numerically superior enemy".

In the course of the colonial wars West Africa suffered much greater human losses than it had in the local wars all through the 19th century.

But why were the peoples of West Africa unable to repulse the onslaught of the colonialists despite

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\* Ibid., p. 215.



their heroic and selfless struggle? Partly because of their military weakness. Whereas the colonial army had up-to-date military equipment—artillery, rapid-firing rifles, etc., the African soldiers were often armed only with bows and arrows or, at best, with antediluvian flint and piston muskets. The correlation of forces was, of course, not in favour of the Africans. The main reason for the Africans' defeat, however, was their disunion. In the struggle against the colonialists each state, as a rule, counted on its own forces. All through the period of the "colonial epopée", i.e., during the 25-30 years, the French never once encountered a united front of African resistance. Moreover, the West African states not only attempted no union, but were even at loggerheads with each other. The colonialists skilfully utilised the strife of the African feudal lords in their own interests. They set one state against another in order later to pounce upon the "victor" weakened in the internecine war. The French colonialists thus managed comparatively easily and one by one to make short work of their antagonists.

#### **Formation of French West Africa**

Towards the end of the 19th century the seizures of colonies in West Africa were almost completed.

The French Government was faced with the problem of organising an administration of the

seized territories. The colonialists did not want to employ the former African chiefs for this purpose, considering them "disloyal". They decided to set up a system in which the administrative functions would be performed by the French themselves (so-called system of direct administration).

In 1895-1904 all lands conquered by France in this part of the continent were united in a single colonial federation—French West Africa (F.W.A.) with the centre in Dakar. In the beginning the federation consisted of seven territories—Senegal, Sudan, Mauritania, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Niger and Dahomey. In 1919 the Upper Volta was set apart as a special administrative unit.

The borders of these administrative areas were drawn entirely arbitrarily, without any regard for the ethnic composition of the population or its historical and cultural peculiarities. As the result, in a number of cases formerly single peoples turned out to be divided. Representatives of the Malinkes, for example, were assigned to Guinea, Western Sudan and the Ivory Coast, those of the Bambaras—to Western Sudan and Senegal, etc. The division adversely affected the formation of national unity and the culture of the peoples.

Soon all posts in the administrative machinery of F.W.A., from Governor-General to district commandants, were filled by Frenchmen. Africans could hold posts only of canton or village chiefs. Moreover, these were no longer the former tradi-



tional chiefs elected in accordance with African customs and having authority over the people. The French appointed to these positions agreeable, obedient and tractable men. Of course, such chiefs had no opinions of their own, and were mere cogwheels in the administrative machinery, executors of the will of the French officials.

Relying on these cogwheels the colonial authorities hoped to establish effective control over the seized territories and to prevent the possibility of any action, any uprising of the subjugated people.

However, they did not always achieve their aims. On the coast and in areas adjoining railways, highways and river routes it was possible, although with difficulty, to establish a "new order" and keep the people in obedience. It was altogether different in the northern regions of F.W.A., the barely accessible wooded areas of Guinea and the Ivory Coast. In those areas military operations continued for a long time. The operations of colonial troops aimed at "pacifying" the natives were ineffective.

The uprising of the Tuaregs which broke out in the northern part of the present Mali Republic in 1915-16 assumed a wide scope. The French colonial troops were able to suppress it only in 1918.

The people of Mauritania continued to offer stubborn resistance to the colonialists. Fearless Mauritanian warriors regularly attacked French garrisons and military columns, always appearing

where they were the least expected. Many regions in Mauritania were controlled by local chiefs long after the establishment of F.W.A. For example, the French succeeded in occupying Adrar Region after long fighting only in 1909. They captured the village of Tichit in 1911. The last stronghold of the Mauritaniens—village of Oualata—fell under the blows of the French in 1912.

Protracted military operations resulted in almost complete exhaustion of Mauritania. Many lives were lost. The cattle herds (camels, sheep, horned cattle)—the main wealth of the country—sharply diminished. But despite the enormous human and material losses the people of Mauritania continued their struggle against the hated colonialists. French historians consider the capture of the city of Tindouf in 1934 the day of final "pacification" of Mauritania.

In Niger the military operations ceased with the occupation by the French troops of the mountainous Air Region (1904) and the capture of the Kaura and Bilma communities (1905).

Partisans were very active on the Ivory Coast, especially in the Baoulé country. Partisan detachments attacked French units and destroyed the system of communications. They appeared even in the environs of Bingerville, the capital of the territory.

In January 1910 the Abbey tribe rose, to a man, against the colonialists. The tribesmen damaged the railway track in 25 places over a distance of 80 km and destroyed many railway structures.



Angoulvant, Governor of the Ivory Coast, decided to conduct a number of punitive expeditions against the rebels. Colonial detachments razed communities to the ground, destroyed crops and killed anybody who fell into their hands.

Similar "scorched land" tactics were used by punitive troops in other parts of the Ivory Coast.

In an attempt to prevent new outbreaks Angoulvant ordered confiscation of all types of firearms from the natives; 112,000 rifles were confiscated by 1914. For each "uprising" the population of whole districts had to pay enormous "military fines" and indemnities. The most suspicious persons, "instigators", but in reality leaders of the resistance, were arrested and deported.

The people of the wooded areas of Guinea—the Guerze, Manon, Toma, Kissi and other tribes—long continued to resist the colonial troops.

Without discontinuing the operations of "pacifying" F.W.A. the colonialists strove to create conditions for "economic development" of the seized territories, in other words, for their economic exploitation. As long as it was "not quiet" and there were military operations in Africa business people were not particularly attracted there. They insisted that the French Government put things in the colonies in order.

During the first years of colonisation, up to the beginning of World War I, the people of F.W.A. were exploited mainly through trade. The trading companies—Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Oc-

cidentale (C.F.A.O.), Société Commerciale de l'Ouest Africain (S.C.O.A.), and others—bought agricultural produce from the peasants at low prices and sold them industrial goods and alcoholic beverages at inflated prices.

During that period the mining industry was not being developed. For that there were many reasons: the mineral resources of F.W.A. were unknown, there were no roads to transport the raw materials to the coast, and, as was already mentioned, the situation was "unstable". Only in some districts of Guinea and the Ivory Coast attempts were made to organise prospecting for gold on a rather large scale.

At the outset the trading companies also hampered the development of industry in F.W.A. because they wanted to be monopolists in the matter of plundering the native population, whereas industry and concessions would diminish the sphere of their activities by drawing labour power away from agriculture. That was why they protested to the French Government against granting any concessions to Europeans in F.W.A.

Thus, during the first 10-15 years after creating F.W.A. the French colonialists were busy mainly consolidating their position, developing an administrative machinery and suppressing the last centres of African resistance. Economically F.W.A. as yet gave the monopolies very little. The situation began to change rapidly at the outbreak of World War I.



Towards the beginning of World War I (August 1914) the colonialists succeeded in mastering the situation over the greater part of F.W.A. The natives now resorted to military action much less frequently. Extensive opportunities for economic exploitation of the colonies appeared.

A poll tax was established for all inhabitants of F.W.A. The tax increased and grew more burdensome with each passing year. Forced labour became increasingly more widespread. Africans were hunted down like beasts. Soldiers got hold of healthy men in villages and sent them to work without pay on plantations owned by Europeans, build roads, etc.

In many areas of F.W.A. the authorities extensively introduced so-called export crops—peanuts, coffee, cocoa, bananas, rice and cotton. France needed these products. African peasants had practically nothing to gain by it. The trading companies bought up these crops at extraordinarily low prices and sold them at high prices in France. Peasants who tried to avoid raising export crops were subjected to various repressions and fines. No wonder that the Africans called their plots sown to coffee, cocoa, etc., "fields of the commandant". At that time all the produce turned out by the peasants was actually owned by the commandant of the district and the trading company officials who backed him.

When France entered the war against Germany the authorities of F.W.A. took measures to expand production of export cultures. That was dictated by the situation that had arisen at home. France experienced an increasingly greater shortage of foodstuffs. The food crisis became particularly acute after the Germans had occupied the northern agricultural areas of the country. The French Government hoped to improve the situation by deliveries of foodstuffs from the colonies. In some measure these hopes were justified. During World War I close to 600,000 tons of peanuts and scores of thousands of tons of palm kernels, rice and other products were exported from F.W.A. to France.

French imperialists also drew upon F.W.A. for manpower for their armed forces. Formations of so-called "Senegal Rifles", natives mainly of Senegal and Sudan (now the Mali Republic), were organised and used by the colonialists at the time of their conquest and pacification of Africa, but with the beginning of the world war the "Senegal Rifles" were recruited in much greater numbers. As early as 1912, while preparing for war, the French Government issued a special decree on forming units of the "black army". The decree provided for forcible recruitment of Africans.

When the war broke out the French army numbered some 30,000 "Senegal Rifles". As the war progressed their number increased, reaching 211,000 in 1918. More than 100,000 of them fought on the European theatre of war. The Africans were usually sent into the very thick of



the battles. Seventeen battalions of Senegalese heroically fought on the Somme, defending Paris. About 25,000 Africans "died for France", to say nothing of those who were missing and were never counted.

The attempts of the French Government to shift part of the military burden on the African colonies aroused the indignation of the natives. One after another uprisings broke out again in different parts of the "federation". We have little information about them because the French authorities did their best to hide the truth about the situation in the colonies.

It is well known, however, that in 1915 the people of F.W.A. began to oppose forcible recruitment for the French army. In Bélédougou (Sudan) representatives of the Bambaras refused to provide soldiers and offered armed resistance to the colonial authorities.

In October and November 1915 there were riots in Upper Volta, in Dedougou, Bobo Dioulasso, Gurunsi and other regions. The punitive troops used artillery, machine-guns and other modern arms against the rebels. This alone attests the considerable scope of the actions.

A powerful uprising involving the Sahara and Eastern Sudan broke out in 1916. The Tuaregs were the soul of the uprising.

The French command finally succeeded in suppressing the disunited centres of uprisings, as it had when subjugating West Africa. It should be

noted, however, that the struggle of the African peoples hampered the utilisation of the resources of colonial countries in the imperialist war.

#### **Creation of Administrative Colonial Machinery**

After the war the French Government started setting up conditions which would permit of increased exploitation of the colonies. It began by improving the administrative machinery.

The administration of F.W.A. pinned great hopes on the demobilised "Senegal Rifles" who were a privileged lot since they received a pension (although a very small one) and enjoyed certain other rights. The French wanted to make them a sort of administrative élite, the local backbone of colonialism.

Some of the former African servicemen agreed to become canton and village chiefs. On the whole, however, the plans of the colonialists did not materialise. The colonialists failed to take into account the changes in the consciousness of the Africans who had gone through the fires of the world war. Many soldiers brought home with them the ideas of liberation proclaimed by the 1917 Russian October Socialist Revolution. These men did not want to curry favour with the colonialists and to help in enslaving their tribesmen. On the contrary, in a number of cases these men contributed to the formation of new



centres of popular unrest in F.W.A., thereby undermining the foundations of the colonial regime.

In most cases the colonial authorities had to resort to the services of mercenary, demoralised elements who disregarded the interests of their people. To encourage its henchmen, the French administration overlooked the numerous misuses of their official position. The French scientist Jean Suret-Canale wrote: "Direct extortion was the usual thing. A canton 'chief' forced peasants to work without pay in his fields, build or repair his houses, supply wives for his harem, and give him 'presents' in money or in kind for no reason at all."

The administrative machinery of F.W.A. was an example of a "system of direct colonial administration" (unlike the "indirect system of administration" prevailing in the British colonies where the authorities ruled through "traditional" feudal chiefs). The native population was deprived of all civil rights under both the direct and indirect systems of administration. They were also debarred from participation in political life. In French West Africa the inequality of the Africans was confirmed by a special code—"l'indigénat". This code not only disfranchised the "subjects" (i.e., the natives), but also empowered the administrators to use sanctions against Africans without justifying their actions in courts of law. Using the articles of the code as a cover the administrators could, for any reason or even without any reason, fine Africans and incarcerate them (for up to 5

days, according to the 1924 code) without investigation or trial.

Of the territories of F.W.A. Senegal was in a somewhat special position. In September 1916 the French Government confirmed its former decisions to recognise the Africans living on the territory of four communes—Dakar, Gorée, Rufisque and Saint-Louis—as "French citizens". That was done, firstly, in order to reinforce at their expense the contingents of African troops fighting at the fronts, and, secondly, to utilise this section of the population in the administrative machinery for the purpose of ruling the "subjects", i.e., the rest of the Africans.

"French citizens"—Africans—enjoyed a number of privileges. They did not fall under the jurisdiction of "l'indigénat" and had the right to send one deputy to the French Parliament. But such citizens were very few. In 1936 they numbered about 80,000 in F.W.A. (78,000 in Senegal and 2,000 on other territories). The bulk of the population even in Senegal enjoyed no political rights. The French Government strictly limited the number of "full-fledged citizens" fearing the spread of democratic tendencies among Africans.

In addition to all other measures aimed at maintaining public order the colonial authorities did their best to isolate the "federation" from the outside world. They wanted to prevent infiltration of "viruses of freedom". The world public actually had no idea of what was happening there at that time. Undesirable visitors, especially non-French,



were not allowed even within gunshot of the colonial borders.

However, all attempts to prevent the development of the national liberation movement in F.W.A. failed. It was possible to impede this process, but not to arrest it. Smouldering discontent with colonial customs was increasing among the masses. In the first place it was directed against the chiefs whom the plain African people considered to be the personification of the existing rule. The chiefs were despised and hated. Their prestige declined catastrophically. In many cases peasants refused to obey them and pay taxes. To avoid impending mass action the French Government passed a law on "native administration" in 1932. The law envisaged election of village chiefs by heads of families of the given villages. But that was illusory democracy. In this case, too, it was the district administrator (Frenchman) who had the last say. It was he who picked from the two or three candidates presented to him the one most "suitable" from the point of view of the colonial authorities.

**Economic  
Exploitation in F.W.A.  
Between  
the Two  
World Wars**

The decades between the two world wars were marked by a certain increase in the inflow of foreign, primarily French, capital in F.W.A. Towns

and ports, roads and lines of communication were being built, and small enterprises for primary processing of agricultural produce were coming into existence.

But despite all this no essential progress in the economy of F.W.A. was made. During that period the foreign investments were small. Agriculture which employed 95 per cent of the population was still in a state of stagnation. No innovations were being introduced. Hoes and, here and there, sickles were still the main implements in the African countryside.

The people of F.W.A. were still exploited mainly through trading channels. The C.F.A.O., S.C.O.A., and United Africa Co. Ltd. enmeshed the colony in a network of their trading stations. Like enormous suction pumps these trading stations sucked out all the values produced by the labour of the Africans.

In the interests of the home country the colonial authorities assiduously continued to cultivate export crops in various areas of F.W.A. with the result that towards the beginning of the 1930s the territories were clearly specialised. Senegal and Sudan were transformed mainly into suppliers of peanuts, Guinea produced predominantly coffee, bananas and pineapples, the Ivory Coast—coffee and cocoa, Dahomey—palm kernels. In a number of cases the striving to hasten the "specialisation" produced sad results. For example, in Senegal where peanuts were cultivated without due regard for soil preservation large tracts of land were



eroded. "The lands of Senegal," wrote Jean-Jacques Poquin, a French author, "were successively exhausted; appearing in the North (Saint-Louis-Louga) the peanut crops shifted southward (Baol, Sine-Saloum, Casamance), leaving a veritable desert in their wake."\*

At that time the mining industry was in an embryonal state with only small amounts of gold, diamonds (Guinea and the Ivory Coast) and titanium-containing sands on the Senegal coast being mined.

The policy pursued by the colonialists was aimed at economically tying each territory as fast as possible to the home country. The inter-territorial economic relations severed in the course of the "colonial epopée" were never restored. During the period between the two wars F.W.A. was a conglomerate of individual poorly interrelated areas with their economy developing one-sidedly in the interests of the French monopolies.

**Struggle  
of F.W.A. Peoples  
Against the Colonial  
Regime in 1919-39**

In their attempts to impede the awakening of social consciousness in F.W.A. the French authorities long forbade the Africans to form any

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\* J. Poquin, *Les relations économiques extérieures des pays d'Afrique Noire de l'Union Française, 1925-1955*, Paris, 1957, p. 43.

political parties or trade unions. No meetings were allowed. Even the activities of religious and cultural societies, ethnic associations, etc., were hampered.

And yet, although surreptitiously and covertly, political currents were forming just the same. Social forces began to mature in the "federation" and subsequently played the decisive role in freeing the African territories from the colonial yoke.

Among the natives there were persons who had received an education in French schools (mainly teachers and officials). These persons became the expressers of the aspirations of their people. As was already mentioned, "Senegal Rifles" returning from military service were also carriers of new ideas. Some of them had felt the breath of emancipatory ideas of the October 1917 Russian Revolution. Among the Senegal troops stationed in Rumania there were units that refused to take part in suppressing Soviet power in Russia. Former African servicemen told their people about Russian revolutionaries who struggled against capitalists and landowners for the happiness of their people. Many "Senegal Rifles" participated together with French soldiers in revolutionary actions in France at the end of World War I and immediately after it. The French Communist Party which did a good deal to free the people of the colonies carried on its work in the masses through these soldiers.



A working class began to emerge in the urban centres of F.W.A., especially in seaports. The first attempts were being made to rally the working people in the struggle for their rights.

On the whole the African people clearly demanded that the colonialists should relax their grip and grant the natives human rights.

It was not easy, however, to attain this end under the conditions of severe colonial oppression. The progressive elements were cruelly persecuted by the authorities. In the struggle for democratisation of social life they encountered many other difficulties. Under the circumstances the revolutionary-minded intellectuals found it very hard to keep contact with the workers; nor could they establish any contact with the peasantry or draw closer to the former soldiers who lived in the very thick of the masses.

The colonial authorities could uncover with comparative ease any attempt at organised action and nip it in the bud.

Additional difficulties also arose in virtue of the fact that in their attempts to counteract the unification of the Africans the colonialists continuously set some nationalities against others and artificially kindled strife between them.

The best opportunities for carrying on political work were in Senegal where a part of Africans enjoyed rights of French citizens. The Socialist Party of Senegal came into existence as early as 1928 and in time became member of the Federation of the French Socialist Party (S.F.I.O.). The party

was headed by Lamine Guèye, a lawyer and an Ouolof by birth. The colonial authorities did not object to its formation. The Senegal Socialists had no intentions of struggling against colonialism, but very loyally co-operated with the colonial administration. At that time political currents and circles also came into existence on other territories of F.W.A. despite the opposition of the authorities. In Dahomey considerable development was attained after World War I by the Young Dahomeyans movement headed by a teacher named Gad-Caroun. A discussion club ("Sudanese Focus") in which Sudanese discussed political problems opened in Bamako (Sudan) in 1937. On the Ivory Coast the African planters and merchants, dissatisfied with the persecution by the colonial authorities, expressed their views in the African newspaper *L'Eclairer de la Côte d'Ivoire* founded in 1935.

One of the reasons for the slow formation of political parties in F.W.A. was the weakness of the working class. The peasantry, the most oppressed and backward part of the population, although participating in anti-colonial actions, could not take upon itself the role of political organiser of the masses.

At that time the working class was only just coming into existence. Small in number and employed in small enterprises dispersed over the vast territory of French West Africa, it was not prepared to set up its own organisations, was not yet imbued with class consciousness.



Nevertheless its role kept growing. The anti-imperialist actions in Dahomey in 1923 roused a broad response in Africa and elsewhere. These actions were inspired and organised by workers.

Transport workers waged an energetic struggle for their rights. Here is an example. In the beginning of 1925 the French authorities arrested three workers of the Thiès-Niger Railway charged with agitation against forced labour. As a protest against the arrest of their comrades the railway workers declared a general strike. The strikers were supported by nearly all representatives of the Bambaras. The action grew, assuming the character of an uprising. The authorities threw troops against the strikers, but to no avail. The traffic on the railway could not be restored. Unable to break the strike the railway administration was finally forced to concede and free the arrested workers.

Large strikes of workers occurred in Senegal, Guinea, Dahomey and on the Ivory Coast in 1933 and later.

The actions of the working people became more organised in 1936-37 with the appearance of trade unions in F.W.A. The French Government officially allowed participation of Africans in trade union organisations by its decree of March 11, 1937. However, the membership of trade unions was artificially curtailed. Those who wished to join trade unions were required to speak and read French and have an elementary education. Of course, there were very few such people in

F.W.A., especially at that time. The overwhelming majority of workers were thus kept out of the trade union movement.

But this scanty decree was a step forward just the same. It enabled the African working people to activate their struggle and to obtain a legal base for their activities.

The working people often ignored the articles of the decree and created their trade union organisations spontaneously. In 1937 F.W.A. already numbered dozens of trade unions. The unions tried to establish contacts with each other in order to act jointly. In 1938 their efforts resulted in the formation of the Trade Union League of Dakar District, consisting only of African trade union organisations (the trade unions of Europeans did not wish to affiliate themselves with it).

**French  
West Africa  
During World  
War II**

After the capitulation of France to the Hitlerites (June 1940) F.W.A. found itself under the rule of Vichyites.\* In July 1940 Pierre Boisson became Governor-General of the federation. He was a narrow-minded and extremely reactionary person.

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\* Designation of the members of the French Government in Vichy during Hitler's occupation of France, fully dependent on fascist Germany.



According to the French General Weygand, Boisson was "true to Pétain to the end".\* But Boisson was true not only to Pétain, but also to Hitler. He willingly admitted to F.W.A. German agents who tried to pave the way for the Hitler Reich to seize this African area. Moreover, Germany received from F.W.A. requisite raw materials. "From Dakar and F.W.A.," wrote Albert Maisel, an American author, "Germany received large quantities of cotton, rubber and cocoa." Part of these products was transported from F.W.A. through the Sahara Desert in lorries.

In July 1940 British troops and units of La France combattante (Fighting France) launched operations aimed at destroying the French naval vessels in the port of Dakar. Two months later they tried to capture Dakar, an important strategic point on the West African coast. Both attempts failed, however. The Vichy troops succeeded in repulsing the attackers. Boisson celebrated the "Dakar victory". Many officers and soldiers of the Dakar garrison were decorated with Orders and medals.

After the Dakar "victory" the contacts between Boisson and German representatives became more frequent. At the end of 1940 Dakar was visited by Mülhausen, a German diplomat who assumed the name of Martin and came under the pretext of preparing "German help" for the

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\* Marshal Pétain was the head of the "French state" during World War II.

defence of F.W.A., but in point of fact for occupying this African territory by Hitlerites. Boisson sanctioned the transfer to the Germans of part of the Polish and Belgian gold reserve kept in Bamako.

Boisson's "era" in the history of F.W.A. was characterised by "firm administration" in regard to the Africans. Illegal confiscations, abuses and racial discrimination were perpetrated quite openly. Africans were shot down on a mere suspicion of sympathy with the Gaullists. Mass repressions were showered upon them for the least "disobedience".

After the landing of Anglo-American troops in North Africa in November 1942 and their assumption of the control over Morocco and Algeria F.W.A. found itself isolated. Pierre Boisson evaluated the situation and decided to renounce his Vichy masters. It was a matter not only of superiority of Allied forces in North-West Africa, but also of the growing anti-Hitlerite moods in F.W.A. In reply to Pétain's order (November 21, 1942) to continue the resistance Boisson reported: "Impossible to take the people and the army in hand in order to make them resist the aggression."\*

On December 7, 1942, Boisson signed an agreement with the Allies on the entrance of F.W.A. into the war against Germany.

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\* Jean Suret-Canale, *Afrique Noire Occidentale et Centrale*, Paris, 1964, p. 585.



Such were Boisson's notorious "high principles". He acted primarily in his own mercenary interests.

During 1943-45 F.W.A. was under the control of Anglo-American military authorities. The conditions of the popular masses during that period did not improve any. Confiscations and mobilisation for forced labour were carried out on as large a scale as before. The authorities demanded deliveries of raw materials and foodstuffs from every canton and village. At that time the career of an administrator depended on his fulfilment of the assignments to collect produce and deliver it to the specified place.

The war was a severe trial for the Africans. They hoped that with the defeat of Hitler Germany and fascist Italy they would win their independence. Vain hopes. The U.S.A., Britain and France broke their promise (given in the 1941 Atlantic Charter) to grant freedom to the oppressed peoples. In one of his speeches Sékou Touré, President of the Guinea Republic, said: "During the war we agreed to necessary sacrifices in the name of the freedom of France. In the course of the 1939-45 war thousands upon thousands of Africans gave their lives to save the freedom of France... We agreed to curtail the consumption of rice which we ourselves produced; we agreed to buy rubber at 150 francs per kilogram in order to resell it to French merchants at 10 francs per kilogram to save France... We suffered all sorts of privations and humiliation

and made all sacrifices in the hope that the freedom of France would bring our country to freedom, that the reconquered sovereignty of France would help our countries in achieving their sovereignty."\*

But the people who held the power in reviving France never even thought of satisfying the aspirations of the African peoples. They did not notice the changes wrought in the consciousness of the Africans and meant to retain the French colonial empire as it had been before the war. At the Brazzaville Conference of Governors of French Colonies in February 1944 the demands of the Africans not only for independence, but even for autonomy were most categorically rejected. "The aims of the civilising mission pursued by France in the colonies," stated the members of the Conference, "exclude any idea of evolution outside the French imperial bloc. Creation of self-government bodies in the colonies even in the distant future must be rejected." The Conference went on record against granting Africans French citizenship, promised a "gradual repeal" of the penalties envisaged in l'indigénat after the end of the war and strictly prohibited the use of local languages in education.

The intensification of colonial exploitation during and immediately after World War II and the intentions of the imperialists to preserve the

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\* Sékou Touré, *L'expérience guinéenne et l'unité Africaine*, Paris, 1961, p. 216.



colonial system revolutionised the masses. The Africans demanded changes and liberation with increasing insistence. Forces capable of leading the struggle against the colonialists were rapidly forming. This period of embryonal development of the national liberation movement in F.W.A. ended in the convocation of the Congress of African Representatives in Bamako in October 1946. A large political movement—African Democratic Union—took shape at that Congress.

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## Chapter 2

### **COLLAPSE OF THE FRENCH COLONIAL SYSTEM IN WEST AFRICA**

#### **Upsurge of the Liberation Struggle After World War II**

After World War II the anti-colonial forces rapidly consolidated in F.W.A., as also all through Africa. Political parties and trade unions, which the colonial administration could no longer prevent, came into existence and strikes of the working people increased.

The unexampled increase in the anti-colonial struggle was the result of the changes taking place on the international arena, as well as within the colonial countries.

World War II (1939-45) hastened the development of revolutionary events on the African continent. The victory of the Soviet Union in World War II, the defeat of the German-Italian fascist bloc and militarist Japan, and the defeat of France and Belgium contributed to a substantial weakening of the world capitalist system, on the one hand, and the growth of progressive and socialist forces, on the other. The African peoples



got new chances to develop the anti-colonial movement. In their struggle against weakened imperialism they could now rely on the powerful support of the socialist countries.

Here is but one example. When Guinea proclaimed its independence on October 2, 1958, the French imperialists tried to strangle the young Republic by means of an economic and political blockade and acts of sabotage within the country. However, they were unable to carry out their sinister designs. During the very first days of existence of the Guinea Republic the Soviet Union and Ghana came to its aid. The U.S.S.R. recognised Guinea as an independent state as early as October 5, 1958, and rendered it material assistance. This enabled the country to withstand the onslaught of French colonialism. In one of his speeches to the Soviet people Sékou Touré, President of the Guinea Republic, said: "I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the assistance rendered to us, the assistance rendered to all developing countries. We want to assure you that this assistance is justified both politically and historically. We can emphasise its importance now that the young African countries have entered upon a new stage of their development."\*

Now that there is a powerful socialist system in the world imperialists do not always dare to pounce upon "disobedient peoples" and to use

armed force against them. Nor did French imperialism dare to resort to arms in the West African countries in order to impede the collapse of its colonial empire.

The disintegration of the colonial system in Africa was also hastened by the growth of the national liberation movement in Asia. The examples set by the Chinese People's Republic, India, Indonesia and other Asian countries which entered upon the path of independent development inspired the African peoples in their struggle against colonial oppression. The solidarity of the peoples struggling against the common enemy increased, as was vividly shown by 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung.

A favourable international situation is of paramount importance to the struggle of nations for their independence. However, liberation of oppressed countries would have been impossible without internal revolutionary forces capable of successfully carrying out an anti-imperialist revolution.

During World War II and immediately after it various branches of industry and plantations began to expand in F.W.A., with the result that the number of people working for hire increased. This was accompanied by an increase of the intelligentsia. In addition to the progressive representatives of the workers and peasants, the African soldiers who had fought in the French army against the fascists also participated in spreading revolutionary sentiments.

\* Sékou Touré, *Independent Guinea*, Moscow, 1960, p. 186.



In most cases the representatives of the bourgeois-feudal circles and the part of the national bourgeoisie, who were inclined to collaborate with the colonialists, were in the leadership of the political parties in F.W.A. Although these elements took part in the anti-imperialist struggle, they vacillated and at times compromised with the forces of imperialism thus betraying the interests of their people. They succeeded in taking the leadership of political parties into their hands only because the working people of F.W.A. were disunited and poorly organised. Wherever the working people and their representatives managed from the very outset to assume the leadership in the anti-imperialist movement—in the Mali Republic, Ghana and certain other countries—the situation, as a rule, became more favourable for carrying out radical reforms, both economic and social.

In addition to the urban working people, the national liberation movement gradually drew in the peasantry of F.W.A., which constituted more than 90 per cent of the total population of the "federation". The economic basis for the participation of the workers and peasants in the liberation struggle was the same: both sections of the population struggled and are struggling to rid themselves of the yoke of foreign capital and to eliminate the exploiter feudal-tribal ruling clique. The existence of this common platform has determined and will continue to determine the stability of the worker-peasant union in the national liberation revolution.

The Congress of African Representatives held in Bamako in October 1946 had an enormous effect on the development of F.W.A. For the first time the Africans, whom the colonial authorities did not even consider human, publicly declared their aspirations. The Congress condemned the persisting inequality between the French citizens and the subjects of the colonies and demanded establishment of equitable relations between F.W.A. and France. At the Congress the African Democratic Union (R.D.A.) took organisational shape. It was the first mass political organisation of Africans in the history of F.W.A. The Union consisted of several territorial sections and was headed by a co-ordinating committee. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, big plantation owner and feudal lord from the Ivory Coast, who at that time held "Left views", was elected President of the Committee. An important role in creating the R.D.A. and in guiding its activities was played by such political figures as Modibo Keita, Gabriel Marie d'Arboussier and Djibo Bakary.

The Bamako Congress formulated the aims and objectives of the new Union, which boiled down to political, economic and social liberation of F.W.A. within the framework of the French Union, consolidation of the unity of all Africans, and



development of relations with the democratic forces of France and the whole world.

The activity programme of the R.D.A. was of an anti-imperialist character and attested the strength and maturity of the African liberation movement.

The formation of the African Democratic Union was actively supported by organisations of the working class and other progressive forces of France. No small part in the upsurge of the national liberation movement in West Africa was played by the French Communist Party and the French General Confederation of Labour.

Taking part in the French Government after World War II the Communists made every possible attempt to do away with the colonial system, but were hampered by the reactionary forces. Nevertheless, the Communists managed to carry into effect some of the important demands of the Africans aimed at democratising the colonial regime.

In May 1947 the reaction expelled the representatives of the Communist Party from the government, but the joint struggle of the French Communists and Africans against colonialism continued. During the first postwar years the R.D.A. deputies in the French Parliament sided on many questions with the deputies of the French Communist Party.

French Communists actively spread Marxist-Leninist ideas in the African colonies. After

World War II they set up in a number of cities in F.W.A. "groups for studying communism" in which the active members of African parties learned the Marxist-Leninist theory.

The activities of the General Confederation of Labour (G.C.L.) deserve special mention for having brought the first trade unions in West Africa into existence and trained trade union leaders. But that was not the only contribution. The G.C.L. helped to spread among African workers the basic theoretical propositions of Marxism and to popularise the organisational principles of the Communist Party. Owing to the efforts of the G.C.L. the ideas of class struggle and socialism became an important element not only of the African trade union movement, but also of the more extensive national liberation movement.

Noting the activities of the French Communists the Central Committee of the African Independence Party wrote in its greetings to the 17th Congress of the French Communist Party: "We Senegalese shall never forget the efforts and many sacrifices the French Communists made in order to help our masses in their advance to independence and socialism." These words could also equally have been said by the peoples of other countries of former F.W.A.



## **Reform of Colonial Administration**

In 1946 the French ruling circles changed the signboard on their empire which began to be called the French Union. They were simultaneously introducing certain changes in the system of colonial administration. In doing this the colonialists meant to "kill two birds", namely, to create an impression of democratisation of the colonial regime and to utilise new institutions as a screen for their activities.

In October 1946 the French Government issued a decree on creation of elective assemblies on the territory of F.W.A. (and other colonies) and in April 1947 established a representative body for all of F.W.A.—Grand Council—with residence in Dakar. The new bodies did not have any real power. Their functions consisted in discussions of local budgets and of a number of other questions of secondary importance. The recommendations these bodies made were of a purely consultative character and the colonial authorities did not have to give heed to them.

The territorial assemblies were elected by a restricted vote. For example, after the range of people who had a right to vote had been extended several times the number of electors in F.W.A. in 1952 was brought up only to 3,063,000 with the population totalling 19 million (the Grand Council was formed from representatives elected

by the territorial assemblies, five from each territory).

The system of administration in the districts, cantons and villages remained unchanged. Each district was headed by an administrator (European), the cantons and villages being administered by chiefs under his supervision. This meant that the French monopolies could continue to plunder and exploit the people of F.W.A.

These reforms thus left the colonial system essentially unaffected. The French Government strove merely to deceive the Africans, to divert them from the struggle for real national independence.

## **Intensification of Economic Exploitation**

After the end of World War II the French monopolies started intensive exploitation of the natural resources of African colonies. In accordance with the "modernisation and equipment" plans the French Government began to allot annually large sums of money which were used mainly for the purpose of setting up favourable conditions for the activities of private foreign capital.

The increased interest of the French monopolies in Africa was due mainly to two factors: first—Eastern Europe, where People's Democracies had formed, dropped out of the sphere of French influence, and second—the colonial system in Asia



had broken up with the result that the positions of French imperialists in that area were seriously shaken.

For the imperialists Africa became the last hope. They considered the "Black Continent" their most reliable reserve and refuge.

The French monopolies devoted particular attention to the development of the mining industry. The network of plantations cultivating export crops was also rapidly extended.

Work in the iron ore deposit on Kalum Peninsula (near Conakry) was started in 1947. Exploitation of deposits of bauxites, phosphorites, manganese and tin ores began, and the mining of titanium ores on the Senegal coast and of diamonds in Guinea and on the Ivory Coast was increased.

The French monopolies strove to transform West Africa into a large-scale supplier of certain agricultural crops and minerals. These products were completely exported to Europe and North America. The imperialists did not want to build factories in Africa so as not to process these raw materials locally. They feared competition of the African industry; they were afraid lest the African countries become economically independent and they may no longer be able to exploit them. While developing the mining industry in F.W.A. the French imperialists raised a hue and cry that they were presumably industrialising the colonies; that, however, was not the case. Real industrialisation presupposes, as is well known, all-round

development of the vitally important branches of industry, whereas the French programmes of development laid particular stress on construction of roads, airfields, ports and means of communication and allotted less money for construction of mining enterprises and, as a rule, no money for the development of the manufacturing industry. Such "industrialisation" policy only consolidated the technical and economic backwardness of F.W.A.

In agriculture the colonial authorities devoted all their attention to increasing production of export crops. During the postwar years (1945-57) the French African colonies began to produce three times as much coffee, twice as much cocoa and 50 per cent more peanuts. The colonialists use this fact to illustrate their "achievements" in Africa, but never say anything about the fact that the export of agricultural produce was increased through intensified exploitation of the peasantry. The African peasants had no machinery, fertiliser or selection seeds. They continued to till the land with hoes and harvested the crops with the simplest implements. To increase the yield under these conditions, they had to work harder and longer hours.

The living standards of the natives not only failed to rise, but in a number of areas even dropped despite the doubling or even trebling of the export. In pursuit of profits the heads of the "trading companies" strove to reduce the purchasing prices of export crops. This was the main



reason for the impoverishment of the peasantry, but the monopolists explained the poverty of the Africans by their "laziness" and "wastefulness". This explanation was completely at variance with facts, but it suited the colonialists who wanted to conceal the consequences of imperialist exploitation of African countries. Sékou Touré, President of the Guinea Republic, rightly pointed out that, "if the peasant of the Upper Volta with an annual income of 10,000-12,000 francs lives worse today than he did 50 or 60 years ago",\* it is colonialism that is primarily to blame for it.

#### **Change of the R.D.A.'s Political Course**

Organisation of the African Democratic Union marked a transition from spontaneous and disunited actions of various nationalities and tribes to a broadly organised struggle of the peoples of Tropical Africa against colonialism. Two years after its organisation the Union numbered a million members.

Scared by the scope of the liberation movement the French Government decided to do away with the R.D.A. It increased repressions against the active members of the Union. In February 1949 the leaders of the Democratic Party of the Ivory Coast were seized and thrown in prison. Bloody

\* Sékou Touré, *La Guinée et l'émancipation Africaine*, Paris, 1959, p. 105.

incidents with scores of wounded and killed were provoked in the towns of Dimbokro, Bouaflo and Segel in January 1950.

However, the attempts to frighten the members of the R.D.A. and to cleave their ranks failed. The repressions against the R.D.A. only served to rally the masses around it. Then the French authorities decided to bring pressure to bear on the leadership of the Union. By threats, promises and bribes they managed to wrest from a number of leaders of the R.D.A. a consent to co-operate with the colonialists. In 1950 F. Houphouët-Boigny announced that the R.D.A. severed its relations with the Communist deputies in the French Parliament.

The change of the political course and the non-participation in the active struggle against colonialism produced a deep internal crisis in the R.D.A. Senegal, Niger and Cameroon left the Union and the influence of the R.D.A. on the masses sharply diminished.

#### **Growth of the Trade Union Movement**

Trade unions began to play an independent role in F.W.A. only after World War II. In the beginning an important part in the development of the trade union movement was played by trade union centres, especially the General Confederation of Labour in the metropolis.



For lack of workers' parties in West Africa and in view of the crisis in the R.D.A. the trade unions became the main form of the working people's organisation. The membership of the trade unions rapidly increased. In French West Africa it was 70,000 in 1953, but by 1956 it reached 180,000.

The trade unions of F.W.A. did not confine themselves to purely economic demands, but also advocated abolition of the colonial regime. The African trade unions made considerable achievements already in the very first years of their existence. For example, in 1947 the independent railwaymen's union of F.W.A. conducted a large railway strike. It lasted several months and ended in a victory of the working people. The authorities had to satisfy the demands of the strikers.

The adoption of a Labour Code for Overseas Territories by the French Parliament in December 1952 was an important gain of the African trade union movement. The Code contained a number of important clauses. It proclaimed absolute prohibition of forced (or obligatory) labour, abrogated the restrictions of trade union activities, guaranteed a minimum wage, established a 40-hour work week at all enterprises (except agricultural) of Tropical Africa, etc. The Code was a serious step forward compared with the earlier labour legislation.

In the course of their subsequent struggle the African trade unions began to feel an increasingly greater need for unity. The correctness of Lenin's

words—"...unity is infinitely precious, and infinitely important to the working class. Disunited, the workers are nothing. United, they are everything"—was being confirmed. Lenin implied that it was important for working people to unite not only in various trade unions at enterprises, but also on a country-wide and even world scale. Attempts to organise a single trade union centre for all countries of "French" Africa were made right after the end of World War II. The First All-Africa Trade Union Conference was held in Dakar as early as 1947, but a real step on the way to unity of the African trade union movement could only be made in January 1957 at the trade union congress in Cotonou (Dahomey) where it was decided to organise a General Union of Working People of Black Africa (U.G.T.A.N.). The resolution of the congress reads that the aim of the U.G.T.A.N. is to establish unity of the African working people and to co-ordinate the efforts of all African trade union organisations in their struggle against the colonial regime and all forms of oppression and exploitation of man by man, and in the defence of their economic and social demands....

The U.G.T.A.N. extended its influence not only to F.W.A., but also to certain other French colonies. In 1957 it had a membership of 250,000. The Union actively defended the interests of the working people and struggled against colonialism.

\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 519.



In connection with the dismemberment of French West Africa in 1959 sections of the U.G.T.A.N. in a number of countries either broke up or their activities were prohibited.

#### "Limitation Law"

The growth of the national liberation movement in the African colonies forced the French Government to make further concessions to the masses. Striving to "prevent a storm" it published on June 23, 1956 a "Limitation Law" which set forth the economic and political reforms to be carried out in 1956-57. An important part was played by establishment of government councils on the territories, which formed a rudiment of African executive power. The members of the councils (they were called ministers) were in charge of so-called "local services". Foreign policy, foreign trade, finances, higher education and a number of other state functions remained in the hands of French authorities. The law introduced universal suffrage in the colonies. Millions of natives were thereby drawn into the public life of the country.

Although the "Limitation Law" contained a number of important concessions, it did not attest any generosity of the colonialists. On the contrary, by introducing the law the French Government pursued primarily its own aims. With the organisation of government councils the administration of F.W.A. was shifted from the "federal centre"

(Dakar) to the territories. The French imperialists believed, and not without reason, that it would be easier to hold in subjection eight small semi-autonomous states than a large unit with 22 million people, like F.W.A. Paris intended to assume the role of arbiter in the controversies between the territories.

By taking the course aimed at dismembering F.W.A. the French Government wanted to disperse the forces of national liberation in this colony. However, its plans failed. Inspired by their victories the masses of the people ever more insistently demanded true and not illusory independence for the African countries. Africans of all persuasions strove for unity of action.

The organisation of the U.G.T.A.N. was followed by congresses of the largest parties of F.W.A.: the African Democratic Union (Bamako, September-October 1957) and the Party of African Reorganisation (Cotonou, July 1958). The two chief demands of the masses—*independence and unity*—rang out powerfully at these congresses. To attain independence the overwhelming majority of delegates of the Cotonou Congress deemed it possible to resort to "direct" action, i.e., use force against the colonialists.

The African Independence Party which came into existence in September 1957 was a new force on the political arena. It rapidly extended its influence on the territories of F.W.A. Its programme was built on principles of scientific socialism. The chief political slogan of the party was



immediate independence for F.W.A. This slogan was completely supported by the U.G.T.A.N.

In the second half of 1958 the situation in F.W.A. was so strained that it threatened to make F.W.A. a "second Algeria". Unable to divert the danger to the colonial regime in Africa with the aid of the "Limitation Law", the French Government resorted to new manoeuvres.

#### Referendum of September 28, 1958

The Referendum concerning the new French Constitution held in France and the colonies on September 28, 1958, was such a manoeuvre. The Constitution abolished the name of French Union and introduced a new term—Community. The authors of the Constitution tried to make believe that the question of belonging to the Community would presumably be decided upon by the peoples of the colonies themselves. The latter (with the exception of the people of Algeria) were formally given the right to choose either to remain in the Community or secede from it by receiving independence.

The Referendum was a well-calculated stunt. Enlisting the support of a number of political leaders, relying on the administrative chiefs and carrying out repressive measures the French colonialists were certain that they were not running any risk. The entire enormous machine of colonial

power was set in motion to compel the voters to drop a yellow ("yes") ballot in the voting box.

The atmosphere of the elections was described by an eyewitness who on September 28 was in the second district of the town of Dotoca, Upper Volta.

He wrote: "One young man dared to vote 'no'. No sooner did he come out of the polling station than a representative of the chief ran up to him and gave him a harsh calling down. The voter asked for his vote to be changed.

"The chief of a Fulbe community from Filifili came with 50 ballots—50 more 'yeses'.

"2:00 p.m. A chief of a Fulbe community from Mena arrived with all the ballots of his village and voted 'yes' for 'his' people.

"Even the shepherds who were away on summer pastures, even the people who had died since the last census, even those who many years previously had gone away to Ghana or the Ivory Coast in search of work—all voted. They all voted because the chiefs of cantons or communities had their ballots."\*

This happened in very many election districts. The upshot of it was that in all the territories of F.W.A., except Guinea, the electors "voted" for the Constitution, i.e., voluntarily, as it were, relinquished their independence.

According to official French propaganda the

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\* Ahmadou A. Dicko, *Journal d'une défaite*, Limoges, 1959, p. 34.



Africans were attached, heart and soul, to their masters and could not think of living without them, they burned with the desire to link their fate with France "for ever".

Subsequent events proved that the Africans either voted against their own will or were deceived and were victims of a fraud.

After the adoption of the new Constitution F.W.A. was officially dissolved (April 1959) and the territories acquired the status of "member states" of the Community. The new organisation of state power was a slightly camouflaged form of colonial dependence. The "member states" were completely subordinated to the President of the Community (the President of France). The masses very soon came to feel this. The example of the Guinea Republic which broke away from the Community and pursued an independent policy produced a revolutionising effect on them. The demand for independence in the countries of former F.W.A. began to assume a universal character.

**Mali Federation.  
Achievement  
of Independence  
by Territories  
of Former F.W.A.**

The striving of the popular masses to put an end to colonialism found its expression in the proclamation on June 20, 1960, of the independent

Mali Federation composed of Senegal and the Sudanese Republic. The French Government long resisted the formation of the Federation, but was finally compelled to yield. However it forced fettering political, economic and military agreements on the new state.

Two months after its birth as an independent state the Mali Federation broke up. Senegal seceded. The break-up of the Federation was due to the refusal of Senegal's leaders to pursue the course of independent, democratic development which was pursued by the representatives of the Sudanese Union in the federal government. No small part in the break-up was played by French colonialists. To prevent the unity of the African peoples, they did their best to sow discord among the leaders of the Federation.

Despite the break-up of the Mali Federation its brief existence proved very important. The formation of the Federation helped Senegal to achieve its independence, contributed to stabilising the situation and aided Sudan in attaining political unity.

The Federation hastened the achievement of independence by the other territories of F.W.A. In the course of August 1960 the Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Niger and Upper Volta proclaimed their independence. Mauritania achieved its independence in November 1960. Although these countries refused to join the Community, they remained in large measure dependent on France. Mauritania, the Ivory Coast, Niger and Upper Volta, like



Senegal, concluded with France economic and military agreements which to some extent restrict their independence.

#### **Afro-Malagasy Union**

The consolidation of the dependence of former F.W.A. countries on France fostered the establishment of the Afro-Malagasy Union (Guinea and Mali took no part in it). This organisation was finally formed in the city of Tananarive in September 1961. The Union was formed, in addition to Senegal, by Mauritania, the Ivory Coast, Niger, Upper Volta, Dahomey, Cameroon, Gabon, Chad, Central African Republic, the Congo (Brazzaville) and the Malagasy Republic.

The Afro-Malagasy Union was a closed political, economic and military group. Its members were bound to each other and to France by mutual guarantees. The leaders of the Union opened the doors wide to foreign monopolies, placed their territories at the disposal of the French militarists, established a special representation in the United Nations, etc. The appearance of this organisation vividly demonstrated to the peoples of Africa the new methods the imperialists used to retain their domination in the developing countries.

The policies of the Afro-Malagasy Union leaders were sharply criticised by representatives of African public opinion. Under the influence of

the criticism the members of the Union first abolished their special representation in the U.N. and then, in 1964, announced the transformation of the Afro-Malagasy Union into an organisation of economic co-operation.

The Afro-Malagasy Union lost its political and military aspects, but that did not lessen the economic and military dependence of its members on France, since France forced fettering obligations not on the Afro-Malagasy Union as a whole, but on each of its members separately.

The member countries of the Afro-Malagasy organisation (Senegal, Mauritania, the Ivory Coast, Niger, Upper Volta and Dahomey) usually lay stress on "co-operation" with colonial powers and attach too great importance in their economy to foreign capital.



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### Chapter 3

## GUINEA AND MALI REPUBLICS ON THE ROAD OF INDEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT

### Guinea Republic

In the Referendum of September 28, 1958, some 95.4 per cent of Guinea voters rejected the draft of the new French Constitution. According to the terms of the vote established by the French Government, Guinea thereby acquired the status of an independent state. That was the first territory of French West Africa that achieved real national independence.

Victory did not come of itself. It had been prepared by the efforts of the Democratic Party of Guinea (P.D.G.) which had travelled a long and arduous course of anti-colonial, anti-imperialist struggle. The P.D.G. was engendered in May 1947 as a section of the African Democratic Union. It is important to emphasise that from the very outset the party threw its doors open to representatives of all of the country's nationalities (formerly political parties and circles had formed in Guinea on the ethnic principle). This greatly alarmed the colonialists. They increased the persecution of the members of the P.D.G., plotted,

provoked friction among the leaders and hindered the work of the party in the masses.

But all they did was in vain. From a small group of patriots the P.D.G. gradually transformed into a solid mass organisation. It enjoyed the growing support of the people. The reason for it is that the party struggled for the real interests of the people. Its programme called upon all Guineans to struggle for freedom and equality, against injustice and oppression. It urged the necessity of doing away with the tribal structure and castes which impeded social development; it contained demands for freedom of political and trade union activity, for a rise in the living standards of the people, etc. But, what was the most important, the programme was imbued, from beginning to end, with anti-colonial spirit and pointed out to the masses the direction and prospects of the struggle.

The following fact attests the growth of the influence of the P.D.G. in the country: until 1956 it had only two representatives in the Territorial Assembly, whereas the March 1957 elections gave the party an overwhelming majority—56 of the 60 seats. After the elections the colonial administration had to assign the formation of the government council of the territory to Sékou Touré, the General Secretary of the P.D.G.

Despite the rigid control exercised by the French administration the government council of Guinea managed to carry out a number of measures which weakened the positions of the



colonialists in the country. The abolition of the institution of chiefs on December 31, 1957, proved of tremendous importance to the subsequent course of the national liberation struggle. "The stronghold of native feudalism has collapsed and all abuses with respect to the rural population will now disappear," said Sékou Touré in connection with this.

With the elimination of the chiefs the administration was democratised. And, although the new government representatives in the villages were by habit called "chiefs", they were no longer appointed, but were elected by the people. This circumstance had played no small part in the course of the September 28 Referendum. The colonialists were no longer able to bring pressure to bear through the chiefs (their henchmen) on the electors. The latter were in a position to vote freely and they responded to the appeal of the P.D.G. to reject the de Gaulle Constitution.

That that was precisely the case is indirectly attested by the results of the elections in Niger. There, too, the government council called upon the people to vote against the Constitution, but the feudal nobility which retained its privileges helped to turn the Referendum in favour of the colonialists.

On October 2, 1958, the Territorial Assembly of Guinea, fulfilling the will of the people, expressed in the Referendum, solemnly proclaimed the independence of the country. The first government of the Guinea Republic was formed and headed

by Sékou Touré, the General Secretary of the P.D.G.

The new government had to start under trying conditions. The colonial authorities did all they could to disrupt normal life in the country. The French officials and specialists were recalled. Agents of the colonialists spread absurd and panic rumours aimed at undermining the people's faith in the leadership of the P.D.G. Profiteers became very active and, calculating on a rapid rise in prices, bought up foodstuffs on a mass scale. The French Government announced its refusal to render Guinea any assistance. It wanted thus to "punish" the Guineans for their "wiffulness" and to bring them to their knees.

But no pressure and no intrigues were any longer able to impede the development of the young Republic. Fearing no imperialist blackmail the people of Ghana offered the Guineans a helping hand. The Guinean state was given considerable moral and material assistance during the very first days of its existence by socialist countries. The attempts of the French ruling circles to organise an economic blockade of Guinea and to isolate it diplomatically were frustrated.

Within a short period of time Guinea was recognised by most of the world's states, including France (in January 1959) now persuaded of the futility of the efforts to retain this country as a colony. In December 1959 the Guinea Republic was admitted to membership in the United Nations Organisation.



The victory of the Guinea people over the colonialists resounded all through Africa. It confirmed once more that the peoples of Africa were fully capable of breaking the colonial chains and, by relying on the socialist countries, of retaining their national independence. This victory helped to increase the anti-colonial movement on the territories of F.W.A., which had received the status of "member states" of the Community.

While rejoicing at the success of the Guinea people, the Africans carefully watched the further course of this, as it was called in the West, "experiment". The imperialists called the attempt of Guinea at independent development an "experiment" thereby trying to prove that the African countries could not exist outside the Community. On the eve and in the course of the Referendum the colonialists continuously asserted that the Africans presumably "had not yet matured" to administer their own affairs, that they would fail, etc. And, when Guinea became independent, they were loath to admit the groundlessness of their statements.

The exorcisms and prophesies of the imperialists failed to hinder the formation of the young Republic. An important part in the success of the "Guinea experiment" was played by the fact that Sékou Touré's government established broad relations with the socialist countries from the very outset and was not afraid seriously to strike out at the positions of the colonialists in the country.

### *Economic Development of the Guinea Republic.*

The first steps of the independent Guinea Government were marked by a striving to restrict the activities of private foreign capital, establish rigid control over it and have the state play the decisive role in the development of the national economy. A State Foreign Trade Administration was set up as early as the beginning of 1959. It was given the monopoly right to import a number of most important goods—rice, flour, sugar, cement, matches, etc. Its functions also included export of coffee, bananas, pineapple and palm nuts. The private companies which had formerly undividedly dominated in foreign trade could now carry on export-import operations only with the permission of this organisation. In June 1961 the Administration was reorganised in view of the development of the Republic's foreign trade relations. Seventeen specialised organisations were set up on its basis to deal with the export and import of certain types of goods.

The establishment of efficient control over foreign trade was accompanied by important financial reforms. On March 1, 1960, the Guinea Government announced the country's secession from the zone of the franc and the replacement of the French colonial currency by a national monetary unit—the Guinea franc. President Sékou Touré compared the importance of this measure with that of the winning of political independence by Guinea.



Since the French banks attempted to sabotage the development of the country, the government closed most of them down. Their functions were taken over by the newly created Central Bank of the Guinea Republic.

The measures carried out in foreign trade and finances safeguarded the country against interference by French imperialists and created prerequisites for introducing principles of planning the national economy.

The First Three-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of Guinea covered the period of 1960-63. The state-owned sector of circulation, industry and agriculture was developed in the course of its fulfilment. This sector is beginning to play an increasingly more important part in the country's economy. In industry it unifies certain enterprises nationalised by the government and enterprises newly built by government organisations. The state-owned sector in agriculture includes model farms, state farms and so-called "centres of rural modernisation".

The Three-Year Plan devoted considerable attention to raising the living standards of the peasantry. At the time of colonialism agriculture had fallen into decay; it was far from everywhere in the country that the rural people were able to secure food for all year round. To help them out of this distressing situation, the plan provided for establishment of a wide network of producers' co-operatives. To develop the co-operative movement it was necessary to exclude opportunities

for development of the rural bourgeoisie since the rich landowners did their best to hamper the activities of co-operatives and tried to break them up from within. The Guinea Government therefore passed a resolution prohibiting from November 1, 1959, the sale, lease, mortgage and even donation of land without permission of appropriate state bodies. That stopped the process of stratification of the peasantry into rich and poor and the development of a bourgeois stratum.

By the end of 1963 the country numbered more than 500 producers' co-operatives with about 50,000 members. That was, of course, only the beginning of the movement. The Guinea Republic has to put a total of more than 2.5 million peasants on a co-operative basis.

Encountering certain difficulties in carrying out the planned economic programmes the Guinea Government tried to overcome them by granting greater freedom of action to private capital. State retail stores were liquidated and sold to private owners in October 1963. In addition to state organisations, operations of private wholesale import companies were allowed. Private persons were allowed to mine diamonds (on circumscribed territories, to be sure), etc.

However, these measures of the Guinea Government failed to bring the expected results. Moreover, the extension of the private ownership element fostered increased profiteering and greater corruption among party and state officials. Failing to improve the country's economic



situation these measures jeopardised the gains of the Guinea revolution and became a serious obstacle to the non-capitalist way of development.

The leadership of the Democratic Party of Guinea very soon realised the dangers presented by the growing private sector. In November 1964 it was forced to carry out reforms aimed at restricting it, and to adopt stringent measures towards profiteers, corrupt officials and all those who, in order to please both the domestic and foreign reaction, undermined the economic foundations of the state. Persons found guilty of speculating in Guinea currency and of illegal export and import of goods are subject to long prison terms. Smuggling may incur capital punishment.

As the result of the November reforms the number of private merchants considerably decreased, while the right to carry on foreign trade was secured exclusively for state companies.

These reforms showed the absurdity of bourgeois economists' discourses about Guinea's "slipping" into a capitalist mode of development and its "disappointment" with the socialist methods of economy. Development of the national economy of young states is a complicated and difficult process in which errors can scarcely be avoided. It is merely important not to lose sight of the main aim which these states wish to achieve. As for Guinea, the line of its development was defined with sufficient clarity by President Sékou Touré as far back as the Sixth Congress of the Democratic Party of Guinea (December 1962). He

said: "Our way is a non-capitalist way and it will remain such, because it is the only way which safeguards the interests of society and frees each person from the injustice which characterises all relations based on exploitation of man by man."\* The new Seven-Year Plan for the Development of the Guinea Republic envisages measures aimed at enhancing the role of the state-owned sector in the country's economy, creation of a national industry and development of producers' co-operatives in the countryside.

The state will concentrate its efforts in the key branches of the economy: infrastructure, power production, agriculture and industry. Special attention is devoted to the infrastructure and power production.

The main objective in industry is to build enterprises for processing local raw materials in order to help increase the national export and decrease the import. For example, it is planned to build a textile plant which will process 3,500 tons of cotton fibre a year. Guinea is growing cotton, but its production must be substantially increased in order to provide for the needs of this plant.

The possibilities of building an iron and steel mill, which would work on local ore, and an aluminium-smelting plant are being studied.

In agriculture the Guinea Government expects, in virtue of organising co-operatives, to increase,

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\* *Revue du développement économique* No. 2, 1964, p. 2.



in the course of the 7 years, the production of bananas from 60,000 to 100,000 tons, pineapples from 6,000 to 30,000 tons, and palm nuts from 25,000 to 75,000 tons.

The Seven-Year Plan shows that the state has retained the principal role in the development of Guinea's national economy. All the largest nationally important enterprises will be built by government bodies and will constitute state property. The private sector is assigned an auxiliary role.

#### **Mali Republic**

After the break-up of the Mali Federation in August 1960, Modibo Keita and the other Sudanese leaders, who had held leading posts in the federal government, returned from Dakar to Bamako, the capital of Sudan.

An Extraordinary Congress of the Sudanese Union, the ruling party of the Sudanese Republic, was called to discuss the situation in September 1960. On September 22 its participants solemnly proclaimed the independence of their country and named it the Mali Republic. The name of an African state was thus revived on the map of Africa in the place of colonial "French Sudan".

It would be an error to picture the creation of the Mali Republic as a single act. Its foundations were being laid down little by little, over a period of many years. The Sudanese Union which has

led the struggle of the country's masses against colonialism and imperialism is justly considered the "Mother of the Mali Republic".

The Sudanese Union-R.D.A. came into existence in 1946, soon after the historical Congress of African Representatives in Bamako, where the African Democratic Union was organised. Until then there had been two parties in the French Sudan (the present Mali Republic): Progressive Sudanese Party, supported by the feudal lords and the colonial administration, and the Sudanese Bloc party which expressed the interests of the broad masses of working people. The members of the Sudanese Bloc were continuously persecuted by the authorities: they were arrested, arbitrarily dismissed from their posts and thrown in prison. To avoid persecution, the leadership of the Sudanese Bloc decided to affiliate itself with the French Socialist Party (S.F.I.O.). But that, as Modibo Keita noted, did not safeguard the party against repressions, despite the fact that the Governor in Bamako, the Governor-General in Dakar, the Minister of the Colonies and the Prime Minister in Paris were Socialists.

The difficulties increased when, after the 1946 Congress in Bamako, the Sudanese Bloc, known as the Sudanese Union, affiliated itself with the R.D.A. The French administration hurled the most absurd accusations at the members of the party in its attempts to strangle the Sudanese Union and isolate it from the masses. The spiritually weak, those who were intimidated by the



threats of the colonialists, left the party, but the majority continued the struggle.

The Sudanese Union encountered many difficulties and, if it managed to surmount them, it did so only because of the support of the people. The party had a particularly hard time in 1950. At that period it had no printed organ; its role was played by a small mimeographed sheet called *L'Essor*. It was edited by the leaders of the Sudanese Union. One day the sheet carried a cartoon representing colonial authorities. The director of the sheet paid a dear price for it: he was thrown in prison. But cartoons continued to appear and each time the newly appointed director found himself behind bars. The leadership of the party no longer knew whom to appoint to this post, whom to sacrifice to the hated Moloch of colonialism. At that time a large number of volunteers came forward. Men and women offered their services as directors of the sheet. They were willing to serve a sentence in prison, to suffer, if necessary, for the party and the people.

The attempts of the colonialists to weaken the influence of the Sudanese Union in the country failed. In 1957 the party won an absolute majority in the Territorial Assembly and its leader Modibo Keita was instructed to form a government council.

On the eve of the Referendum of September 28, 1958, the leadership of the Sudanese Union decided not to oppose the draft of the new French Constitution on the assumption that under the circumstances they could not win, whereas their

defeat would give the colonialists grounds for routing the country's progressive forces.

But as soon as French Sudan was transformed into the Sudanese Republic—member of the Community—the leadership of the party took a course aimed at achieving complete independence. The Sudanese Republic was one of the active members of the Mali Federation which had arisen on the ruins of the French colonial system in West Africa.

With the break-up of the Mali Federation the Sudanese Union, remaining true to its political line, led the movement of the Mali people aimed at consolidating their independence. One of the first steps of the Government of the Mali Republic headed by Modibo Keita was to annul the unequal agreements which France had forced on the Mali Federation. That gave the young Republic a free hand and cleared the way for its economic and social progress.

The decisions of the September Congress of the Sudanese Union party on economic problems mentioned the necessity of eliminating the colonial heritage in the economy and of creating a new economic structure of society. The party intended to accomplish this task by socialist planning with due regard for the peculiarities of African reality. These decisions formed the basis of the practical activities of the Mali Government.

*Foreign Policy of the Mali Republic.* The young Republic has pursued a policy of friendship and co-operation with all countries on the basis of



equality and mutual advantage since the very first days of its existence. Mali renounced the unequal agreements with France as early as 1960, but despite that the French troops remained in the country and showed no desire at all to leave. The leadership of the Sudanese Union and the government resolutely demanded that France withdraw her troops and liquidate her military bases on the territory of Mali—in Bamako, Kati, Chao and Tessalit. The presence of foreign troops in the Mali Republic constituted a continuous threat not only to its own independence, but also to the existence of the neighbouring African states. Under the circumstances the French Government was forced to yield to the Mali demands. By that time the Republic was recognised by numerous countries and was receiving extensive aid from the socialist states. On September 5, 1961, the last foreign soldier left the land of Mali.

The development of relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist states played an important part in the making of the independent Mali Republic. The U.S.S.R. was one of the first to recognise the Mali Republic and to render it assistance in the development of the national economy. Characterising the relations between the Soviet Union and Mali, as well as other African countries, Madeira Keita, prominent Mali statesman, said: "The peoples of Africa highly appreciate the help and friendship of the Soviet Union because they all know that the Soviet Union does not speculate on their poverty and

backwardness, does not make idle promises and always carries out its obligations."\*

During the visits of Madeira Keita, the Mali Minister of Justice, in March 1961, and Modibo Keita, President of the Republic, in May 1962, to the Soviet Union an agreement on economic and technical co-operation was signed between the two countries. The U.S.S.R. granted the Mali Republic substantial credits. Industrial enterprises are being built, the state enterprise—L'Office du Niger—is being expanded and large state farms are being organised with the aid of these credits. Soviet geologists are prospecting for mineral deposits on the territory of the Republic.

Economic and technical co-operation with the Soviet Union contributes to the successful fulfilment of the plan for the development of the Mali Republic and to the making of its national economy.

An important aspect of Mali's foreign policy is its struggle for African unity and international co-operation. On July 1, 1961, Mali, Ghana and Guinea formed a Union of African States. Friendly contacts with neighbouring countries are being established. In recent years an agreement marking off the borders between Mali and Mauritania and a treaty of friendship with the Republic of the Ivory Coast were signed, and the relations with Senegal, severed after the break-up of the Mali Federation, were resumed.

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\* *Pravda*, March 14, 1964.



The Mali Republic is actively participating in the Organisation of African Unity and is waging a resolute struggle for liberation of the remaining African territories from colonialism. It strives to co-operate with its neighbours in economy and is taking part in working out a number of intra-African projects: utilisation of the power of the Niger and Senegal rivers, construction of a trans-African railway through the Sahara, and carrying out other mutually beneficial measures.

The Republic is strictly adhering to a policy of positive neutrality and non-alignment and is opposed to the arms race. The Mali Government was one of the first to approve the Moscow Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water.

*Rights of Man.* It is impossible to build a new life without putting an end to the survivals of the past, which degrade man, weigh heavily on his consciousness and hamper his development as an active member of socialist society. The Sudanese Union-R.D.A. and government wage a daily struggle against these survivals. The motto of the Mali Republic—"Freedom and Justice"—embodies the strivings of the Malians to establish new and equal relations among people.

The fundamental rights and liberties of man and citizen are guaranteed by the Constitution of the country. Unlike the former constitutions (of the Sudanese Republic and the Mali Federation), the present Constitution of the Republic guarantees the right of citizens to work and rest. This impor-

tant provision once more attests the socialist tendencies in the development of Mali. Only socialism makes it possible to grant and guarantee citizens the right to work and rest. No mention of it is to be found in the constitutions of any bourgeois states.

The democratism of the Mali state is also evident in the recognition of the working people's rights to strike, organise trade unions and set up co-operative enterprises. Forced labour is prohibited in the Republic. The Mali Constitution reads that "labour is the duty of every citizen, but nobody may be forced to do particular work except in exclusive cases dictated by interests of society. . . ."

*Course Set for Socialist Economy.* Under the colonial system the economy of the country stagnated. The industry, even small-scale industry, barely developed, and agriculture, in which more than 95 per cent of the total population was engaged, was carried on in the fashion it had been a thousand years before. The colonialists who looked at their African possessions from the standpoint of their selfish interests considered it unprofitable to develop in Mali even the mining industry. They said it cost too much to transport raw materials from Mali to the ocean. That is why, when Mali proclaimed its independence, it was on a lower level of economic and social development than Senegal, Guinea, the Ivory Coast and Dahomey.

\* *Les Constitutions Africaines*, Vol. 1, Paris, 1961, p. 165.



The leaders of the Mali Republic arrived at the conclusion that the country's economic structure should be reshaped on the basis of the state-owned sector and peasant co-operatives, i.e., on the basis of a socialist system of economy. Essentially the country had no national bourgeoisie which could oppose the socialist way of economic development.

The general line of development of the Mali economy was first drawn in the decisions of the Extraordinary Congress of the Sudanese Union in September 1960. The choice was made in favour of a socialist, planned economy. As President Modibo Keita observed, socialist economy presupposes effective state control of production and trade, remedy of the abnormal situation in which goods produced in the country are imported, organisation of a state-owned sector in the vitally important branches of the economy, development of the co-operative movement, self-dependence in the choice of objects for capital investments and in the granting of credits for them. The First Five-Year Plan of Development for 1961-65 was elaborated in the country in accordance with these propositions. 78,000 million Mali francs are to be invested in the economy during this period in order that in 1965 production in the country may increase 40 per cent compared with 1959.

The plan devoted special attention to agriculture—the main occupation of the indigenous population. On this basis it was intended to increase the export of agricultural produce and completely to provide the population with food produced

in the country. In addition to the increase in agricultural production the plan envisaged development of certain branches of industry, engaged in primary processing of raw materials, and geological prospecting.

The fulfilment of the plan, which began October 1, 1961, involves considerable difficulties. The country does not have enough money. Only one-tenth of the investments is covered by internal accumulation, the rest of the money is borrowed. The Republic is experiencing a shortage of skilled labour, etc. Nevertheless, the past years show that the new system of economic construction and labour organisation is effective. The Sixth Congress of the Sudanese Union, held September 10-12, 1962, noted with satisfaction the "decolonialisation of the economic structure" and hailed the creation of state-owned enterprises in the "main spheres of activity". The Congress instructed the "leadership of the party to continue extending the participation of the state in the economy and trade by organising consumers' co-operatives and increasing co-operation among peasants and handicraftsmen".

Today the Government of the Mali Republic is not raising the question of total liquidation of foreign enterprises. It is striving to utilise foreign capital to develop the national economy. In the future, however, the private foreign sector is to be replaced by the state-owned sector. The government pursues a different policy in regard to the private national sector whose representatives



are for the most part small merchants. The mercantile character of private national trade hinders effective planning of the economy and is a heavy burden on retail prices. The individualist nature of the private national sector therefore impedes the progress of the country toward socialism. That is why the Mali Government decided to impart a socialist form to the activities of small merchants by uniting them in co-operative organisations.

With the approach to socialism the share of the private sector in the country's economy will thus decrease, while the state-owned sector will continuously increase.

The key positions in the national economy are already in the hands of the state. The state-owned sector dominates in domestic and foreign trade, transport and the financial system. The state intends to turn the means of production over to the working people.

The reorganisation of the financial and credit system proved very important for it was thereby possible successfully to introduce principles of planning into the development of the economy. The French banks operating in the country sabotaged the government measures aimed at strengthening the state-owned sector. The banks were closed down and were replaced by national financial and credit institutions—Bank of the Mali Republic, People's Bank, Mali Credit Bank, etc. In 1962, without dropping out of the zone of the

franc, the government replaced French colonial francs by a national monetary unit—the Mali franc.

A state export and import company (SOMIEX) began to operate in November 1960 and greatly reduced the part played by private capital in foreign and domestic trade. This company was granted a monopoly right to import and export a number of most important goods. SOMIEX controls one-third of the country's import (in cost) and two-thirds of its export. The company also supplies state, semi-state and co-operative organisations with imported goods at fixed prices.

The interference of the state in foreign trade helped to carry into effect a correct export-import policy corresponding to the interests of the people. In an attempt to obtain more means for economic construction the country is increasing its export in every possible way. On the other hand, it has stopped spending its deficient foreign currency on chewing gum, trinkets and other things without which the people can very well manage.

Another state organisation—Administration for Processing and Trading in Cereals—regulates the sales of millet, rice and maize in the local market and supplies the people of Mali with these products.

To strengthen the state-owned sector, the Mali Government declared the mining and power industries to be state monopolies.

Many industrial enterprises have been nationalised. Plants and factories which will also be owned by the state are being built in Mali with



foreign aid. The government is as yet striving to build enterprises for processing local raw materials, but before long the country will lay down foundations for a national heavy industry.

The state-owned sector dominates in the transport. National companies—Air Mali, Administration of Mali Transport, etc.—have been organised and are functioning successfully.

The state is playing an exceedingly important part in the reorganisation of agriculture, the key branch of its present-day economy. The lands of L'Office du Niger in the central delta of the Niger are under the jurisdiction of government bodies. Arable areas are increasing with each passing year. As the result of government efforts they will amount to 65,000 ha in 1965.

State organisations are supervising the development of the co-operative movement in the Mali countryside. Seydou Badian Kouyate, Minister of Economy and Planning of the Mali Republic, emphasised that "development of agriculture in a country with a backward economy is impossible without collective efforts and collective discipline".\* Buying and selling land in Mali is restricted; the government has closed the channels for the development of the rural bourgeoisie thereby providing greater possibilities for co-operative forms of economy.

The Mali co-operatives are based on the following principles: collective land-tilling with

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\* *Afrique* No. 9, 1962, p. 22.

its income replenishing the village treasury, collective sales of the produce, collective purchases of industrial goods, and collective work of public character. It is assumed that by 1965 each rural family will have one hectare of land in collective fields. With the aid of co-operatives agricultural production is to be increased 70 per cent during 1961-65. Attempts are being made to cultivate new crops—sugar cane, tea and coffee.

The countryside is supplied with agricultural machinery and implements, seeds, fertiliser, chemical weed- and pest-killers, and consumers' goods through the Mutual Aid Societies for Agricultural Development (S.M.D.R.). These are government organisations. The directors of S.M.D.R. are appointed by the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic and are supervised by district commandants—local government representatives. As *L'Essor*, organ of the Sudanese Union, pointed out, through the co-operatives S.M.D.R. are carrying out the state policy in agriculture.

In developing the co-operative movement the government of the Republic does not confine itself to the aim of improving the condition of the peasantry. One of its resolutions reads that "well functioning rural co-operatives are the main guarantee of our success in the struggle for economic independence". Owing to co-operatives labour productivity is rising, the volume of production is increasing and the country is growing richer. "To produce more in order to import



less" is the task the Sudanese Union-R.D.A. has put before the agricultural workers and all working people.

*On the Basis of Scientific Socialism.* Characterising the advantages of socialism *L'Essor* wrote: "Wherever economic development proceeded empirically, on the basis of private capital and its inner law—'profit first and foremost'—societies suffered internal division, various groups of the people were continuously opposed to each other and secretly or openly struggled against each other.... We choose a policy which leads to socialism and is based on broader concepts of the future, especially on our striving to avoid in our society the difficulties resulting from economic development based on private capital...."\* In one of his speeches (May 1964) President Modibo Keita stated: "We all realise that the future of all people, the African people in particular, lies, and cannot but lie, along the path of socialist development."\*\*

Socialism is not an invention of any particular person. It is a social and economic stage through which people pass in the course of their development. The objective laws governing the movement of human society are the same for all countries and all continents. The socio-economic formations follow each other in a definite sequence: capitalism replaces feudalism and socialism takes the place of capitalism. This is the way

\* *Economie et politique* No. 96, Paris, 1962, p. 92.

\*\* *L'Essor*, May 26, 1964, p. 3.

adherents of scientific socialism view the development of history.

The question is, however: does scientific socialism take into account the concrete historical conditions of development of particular countries and peoples? The answer to this can be only in the affirmative. Scientific socialism holds that in carrying out any socialist reforms the particular country must proceed from its historical, national, cultural, economic and political conditions, must consider its traditions and the international situation. For example, under present-day conditions, when the young African states can rely on the powerful support of the socialist system, they do not have to develop capitalism first in order that they may go on to socialism later. They may by-pass the stage of mature capitalism and begin to build a socialist society at once.

The development of socialist relations in Mali and other African countries naturally has its own special features characteristic only of these countries, if we imply by these features the particular ways and means of transition to socialism corresponding to the African conditions.

The important feature of scientific socialism is that it considers impermissible the existence of an uncontrolled private sector, in addition to the state-owned sector, in the economy of a country, for if the private sector begins to assume a dominating position in the country, it will be impossible to avoid the division of society into rich and poor and to eliminate exploitation. By



giving any preference to private enterprise the African countries will not be able to develop their own manufacturing industry, especially the heavy industry. It is well known that private capital is interested only in the branches of economy which guarantee the highest profits—mining, light or food industry. But the development only of these branches will in no way weaken the dependence of the young states on foreign countries. Under conditions of predominant private capitalist relations no co-ordination and planning of economic life are possible.

Does this mean that scientific socialism entirely excludes the use of private capital? Not at all. At certain stages of development it is not only possible, but necessary, to use private capital, provided it is used in the interests of the whole people, i.e., to develop the country's economy and to fulfil the national plans of development. It is important that the share of the state-owned sector in the country's economy should increase and that of private capital should decrease, or there is a danger that capitalist relations may become the predominant relations, and that is why the countries wishing to proceed along the socialist way of development allow private capital to develop only to a certain extent and under state regulation (supervision, control, determination of spheres of activity, etc.). This applies to national private capital and, especially, to foreign private capital which strives to retain the key positions in the economy of African countries.

A number of countries, including Mali, reject the doctrine of so-called "African socialism" and strive to make practical use of scientific socialism. This was stated, in particular, at the Sixth Congress of the Sudanese Union in September 1962.

*Results of Independence.* What did the people of Mali gain by their independence? What are the results of the country's efforts to build a new life?

Here are some data showing the achievements of the young Republic. The Mali people have begun to eat better and have more produce for export. In 1960 the millet harvest amounted to 765,000 tons, whereas in 1964 it exceeded 1 million tons; in the same years 125,000 tons and 210,000 tons of rice, 105,000 tons and 128,000 tons of peanuts, 6,500 tons and 27,400 tons of cotton were produced respectively. The country had never yet had so much agricultural produce.

The volume of industrial production is growing.

During the period of independence the number of medical institutions has doubled. In 1959 there was only one maternity health centre in the country; in 1964 there were 76. A network of people's pharmacies has been created.

The government has exerted great efforts aimed at liquidating the backwardness of public education. In 1959-60 the country's elementary schools had an enrolment of 57,000 children. That was one of the results of the 80 years of



French colonisation. In 1963, i.e., in only three years of independence, the number of school-children exceeded 100,000.

The government is taking steps to hasten the social and economic progress of the Republic. No small importance is attached to educational work. Part of the population has retained harmful habits from the former regime: shunning work, profiteering, taking advantages of the people's power without giving anything in return, etc. The people in general demand that a war be declared on these habits; they want to put an end in the shortest possible time to idleness, uselessness and parasitism which should have no place in socialist society where one works for all and all work for one.

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The efforts of the Mali and Guinea republics and their consistent struggle against colonialism have hastened the course of the national liberation movement in West Africa and have paved the way to independence for all the other territories of French West Africa. At first the French Government tried to retain its dominion on the territories of F.W.A. in a disguised form. It granted the territories the status of "member states" of the Community, which was a typically neocolonialist trick. Modibo Keita said that neocolonialism "means that an 'independent' country

sees itself indirectly administered by the former colonial power".\* This time, however, the attempt of the French Government failed. The examples of the Guinea and Mali republics showed the peoples of West Africa the road to achieving complete independence and the reality of independent existence. And the peoples have taken this road. True, not all territories of F.W.A. have as yet succeeded in freeing themselves from neocolonialist fetters, but the struggle is continuing. The day will come when the last remnants of colonialism will be liquidated and the peoples will be masters of their own destinies.

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\* Modibo Keita, *A Collection of Speeches*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, p. 42.



#### Chapter 4

### DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER COUNTRIES OF FORMER FRENCH WEST AFRICA AFTER THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

#### Republic of Senegal

*Formation of the Republic of Senegal.* In the course of the September 28, 1958 Referendum the Senegalese Progressive Union, the ruling party of the country, supported the de Gaulle Constitution with the result that Senegal became a "member state" of the Community. However, this status could not satisfy the popular masses who strove to achieve complete independence. On June 20, 1960, their strivings resulted in the creation of the Mali Federation.

After the break-up of the Federation the Republic of Senegal proclaimed its independence on August 20, 1960. Unlike Mali, however, the country did not break with the Community and remained true to the unequal agreements which had been forced on the Mali Federation by the French Government.

To suppress the opposition to this political course within the country, the Government of Senegal prohibited the activities of such progres-

sive organisations as the African Independence Party (in August 1960) and the Senegalese section of the General Union of Working People of Black Africa (in November 1960). The activities of the P.R.A.-Senegal opposition party\* were restricted.

The French colonialists approved these actions of the Senegalese Government. They hoped that the repressions against progressive elements would enable them to consolidate the positions of foreign capital in the country and would fasten Senegal to the chariot of the Community.

*Coup d'Etat of December 18, 1962.* Despite the persecution of those who actively opposed colonialism the people were growing increasingly more dissatisfied with things as they were. The "African socialism" of President L. Senghor did not in any way mitigate the conditions of the masses. The above doctrine actually served to cover up the doings of the foreign monopolies. In order to prevent mass actions, a state of emergency was declared in Senegal in September 1960 for an indefinite period.

The coup attempted by Mamadou Dia, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, attested the aggravation of the political crisis, the increase in the social and economic contradictions in the country. Mamadou Dia was considered a more

\* P.R.A.—African Regrouping Party formed in Dakar in March 1958. P.R.A.-Senegal is the party which broke away from the P.R.A. before the 1958 Referendum and advocates an independent Senegalese course in economy and politics.



consistent "Socialist" than L. Senghor. In the summer of 1962 this statesman came to Moscow to study the Soviet experience and its possible utilisation in Senegal. The visit resulted in establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and agreements were signed on economic, trade and cultural co-operation.

However, Mamadou Dia's firmer and more independent course met with strong opposition on the part of several members of the Senegalese Government and parliament, who were closely associated with the French colonialists. To break this resistance, Mamadou Dia ordered the gendarmerie on December 17 to surround the building of the National Assembly in Dakar. But at L. Senghor's request French paratroops intervened and the day was carried by Senghor. Mamadou Dia was arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for life.

The National Assembly passed a resolution to eliminate the post of Chairman of the Council of Ministers and to establish a presidential system in Senegal. On December 19, 1962, L. Senghor formed the first presidential government. This change in the life of the state was consolidated by approval of the new Constitution of the Republic of Senegal in the Referendum of March 3, 1963.

The coup fostered a certain increase in the opposition parties, namely, the P.R.A.-Senegal and the Bloc of Senegalese Masses. They were reinforced by people who shared the views of

former Prime Minister Mamadou Dia and who, in a number of cases, were victimised by the "purge" which followed the coup. Some of Mamadou Dia's followers joined the at that time illegal African Independence Party.

In an attempt to counteract the rallying and strengthening of the opposition forces President L. Senghor started negotiations with the leaders of the P.R.A.-Senegal and the Bloc of Senegalese Masses. He wanted to win them over to his side by a number of concessions and partly succeeded in it. Most of the leaders of the Bloc of Senegalese Masses, including Boubacar Gueye and Abdorahmane Diop, joined in with L. Senghor's party. The Bloc of Senegalese Masses ceased to exist. On the other hand, the leaders of P.R.A.-Senegal refused to unite with the Progressive Senegalese Union. To intimidate the members of the P.R.A.-Senegal, the authorities arrested Ly Abdoulaye, the leader of the party. Many active members of the P.R.A.-Senegal were also subjected to repressions. However, the authorities were unable to suppress this opposition party.

The attempts to prevent the spread of the African Independence Party's influence on the masses also failed. In 1962 the party met in congress which advanced the slogan of creating a "United Senegalese Independence Front". In accordance with this slogan a national democratic front uniting all of the country's progressive forces was organised in Senegal at the end of 1963. The front is struggling for an independent



policy, liquidation of foreign military bases in Senegal, development of the national economy, peace and social progress.

*"African Socialism" in Action.* Some bourgeois commentators call Senegal the home of "African socialism". According to President L. Senghor, he was the first to introduce this term. It was also he who elaborated the main theses of this doctrine.

L. Senghor rejects scientific socialism. He reasons as follows: Marx lived in Europe last century under conditions of a class society. Since the situation in Africa is different, Marxism is "inapplicable". In Senegal, says L. Senghor, there are no classes, but only occupational groups:

- 1) professional people (lawyers, physicians, pharmacists and notaries public) and merchants;
- 2) people working for hire (officials, employees and workers);
- 3) peasants (shepherds, fishermen and handicraftsmen).

The conditions under which these groups live, Senghor notes, are much the same.

It is true that society is still barely differentiated in Senegal, but Senghor's division of the population into groups cannot be taken as scientific or as correctly reflecting reality. A process of class formation is operating in Senegal, as also in many other African countries—a national bourgeoisie is being formed, and a working class is growing and gaining strength.

The policy of "African socialism" in economy fosters the formation of a class society in Senegal.

In words the Senegalese Government is against a "free enterprise" system. In reality, however, it is not. The course pursued in Senegal is aimed at a coexistence of three sectors in its economy: "socialised agriculture", a "mixed" sector, including state companies and combined state and private companies, and a free, purely capitalist sector. The capitalist sector predominates and the state-owned and semi-state enterprises are subordinate to it. And as long as the free enterprise element is engulfing the country the population is rapidly being divided into classes. One of the main arguments of the "unsuitability" of the theory of scientific socialism for Africa thus falls away.

Incidentally, similar processes are operating in many other African countries. Doctor Kouyate, a Mali Minister, said: "Marxism brings forward the concept of class. But the point of view which opposes the absence of classes in Africa to Marxism is not a solution. . . . Our countries are encouraging private initiative. A proletariat will appear. . . . The assertion that we have no classes is true today, but it may not be true tomorrow."\*

Proceeding from the unscientific premises of "African socialism" the Government of Senegal is pinning its hopes in the matter of developing its economy mainly on private foreign capital. Private national and foreign capital is granted complete freedom of trading and banking. It has

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\* *La vie africaine* No. 33, 1964, p. 37.



almost unlimited opportunities in industry and power engineering. The Four-Year Plan (1961-65) for Economic and Social Development envisages participation of the state only in the branches of industry in which private capital is not interested.

Thus the state does not aim to play an independent role in the economy; it merely supplements the activities of foreign capital. However, life itself shows that it is impossible to plan the development of the economy by relying mainly on private foreign capital. The first years of fulfilment of Senegal's Four-Year Plan revealed its failure. For example, the plan envisaged investing 17,000 million francs in the country's power and industry during the four years, but it subsequently developed that the investments would not exceed 9,000 million francs. Private monopolies refuse to pursue the aims of the plan if they do not ensure a maximum of profits.

The "socialisation" of agriculture in Senegal boiled down mainly to setting up a state organisation—Office for Commercialising Agriculture (O.C.A.). This organisation buys through rural marketing co-operatives the produce of peasants and sells to them the necessary machinery, implements and certain consumers' goods.

It goes without saying that by excluding numerous middlemen from domestic and foreign trade the O.C.A. is doing a good thing. But it does not help seriously to reorganise the social and economic relations in the Senegalese countryside. This is not its function. The "socialisation" of

Senegal's agriculture, announced as one of the most original and revolutionary measures, thus appears to be a very modest measure, indeed.

The country numbers hundreds of marketing co-operatives, but has scarcely any producers' unions. It follows that the individual farmers are still disunited and doomed to drag out a miserable existence.

Some people hold that whatever this "African socialism" may be it is better than capitalism and can therefore be accepted. But this is no way to pose the problem. President Modibo Keita emphasises the importance of disclosing the essence of "African socialism", otherwise, he says, the word "socialism" will be deprived of its meaning and the most reactionary and capitalist systems will be able to hide behind it. There is not, nor can there be, any such socio-political formation as "African socialism". Either the country will confidently march along the road of socialist construction on the basis of scientific socialism, or the doctrine of "African socialism" may become a screen for the development of capitalist relations, in which case it will become more dangerous and harmful. For some time the masses will think that the country is building socialism, whereas in point of fact that will be a process of consolidating the positions of private capital, which will make it much more difficult to turn to the socialist way of development. That is why the sooner the activities of the African political parties are based on scientific socialism,



the more successfully will the young countries of the continent solve the problems they are faced with.

#### Republic of the Ivory Coast

*Declaration of Independence.* As a "member state" of the Community the Ivory Coast began its existence December 4, 1958. The helm of state power was taken by the Democratic Party. In May 1959 F. Houphouet-Boigny filled the post of Prime Minister of the country.

The Government of the Ivory Coast demonstrated its friendly feelings for the French Government from the very outset. The latter tried to utilise this circumstance in its own interests. With the aid of the Ivory Coast the French Government attempted to prevent the formation of the Mali Federation. But when it, nevertheless, did come into existence, measures were taken to neutralise its influence on the masses. They resulted in the formation of an Entente Council composed of the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Dahomey and Niger, i.e., a group of countries opposed to the Federation.

However, the attempts to prop up the shaken edifice of the Community failed. The contrast between the Mali Federation, which was striving for real independence, and the Entente Council was too sharp. In the Entente Council France actually enjoyed the same rights that she had during the colonial regime.

That state of affairs could not last very long, however. The popular masses of the Ivory Coast ever more insistently demanded independence and liquidation of the too "friendly" guardianship of the colonialists. They no longer wanted to live as of old. In virtue of this clearly expressed will of the Africans France had to concede. The colonialists were no longer able to rule Africa as of old and were therefore forced to assent to the independence of all their former colonies in Africa.

On August 7, 1960, the Ivory Coast was proclaimed an independent Republic, and in the beginning of 1961 F. Houphouet-Boigny, who had become President of the Ivory Coast, "specified" on behalf of the countries of the Entente Council that after achieving their independence they no longer considered themselves members of the Community.

It looked as though the Ivory Coast had really become completely independent. But that impression was deceptive. Despite all the acts and declarations of independence the positions of the French monopolies on the Ivory Coast were not in any way affected. The French imperialists continued to consider this country the bulwark of their influence in West Africa.

*Policy of the Democratic Party of the Ivory Coast.* Certain circles of the country, connected with the colonialists (the developing national bourgeoisie, feudal elements and part of the national intelligentsia), assumed the leadership



of the Democratic Party, whose majority consists of peasants, handicraftsmen and workers, and are determining the course of the government's domestic and foreign policy. Unlike a number of other parties of West African countries, the Democratic Party of the Ivory Coast is not striving to effect any socialist reforms. On the contrary, it openly declares its adherence to the "private enterprise" system, acts as a faithful guard of private property and in every possible way encourages foreign investments. The activities of private foreign monopolies in the country are practically unlimited.

While strengthening and extending its relations with France, the U.S.A., F.R.G. and other Western countries, the Government of the Ivory Coast is avoiding establishment of diplomatic relations and development of economic and cultural relations with socialist countries.

Who stands to gain by this policy? First of all, of course, the foreign monopolies. They are fleecing the country by taking away enormous profits, dividends, etc. According to official figures, the flowing off of capital from the Ivory Coast in 1961 amounted to some 80 million dollars, whereas only 40 million dollars of foreign capital was invested in the country during the same period.

This policy benefits a relatively small section of the national bourgeoisie whose interests are closely interwoven with foreign capital. The production of coffee and cocoa is almost entirely

in the hands of African farmers, but the export of these products is effected and controlled by French companies.

The losers are the broad popular masses, i.e., the peasants and workers who are exploited and who suffer privations for the sake of high profits of "their own" and foreign capitalists. This example very well shows that class interests are much more important than racial feelings.

The relations between the Ivory Coast and France are regulated by a number of agreements and a bilateral military treaty signed in April-May 1961. However, neither the agreements nor the treaty have been concluded on a basis of equality. For example, France has the right to build military bases and keep military garrisons on the Ivory Coast.

*Economic Development.* The economy is being developed completely by private capital, private foreign monopolies in the first place.

But may be it is not bad that the government of Houphouet-Boigny seeks to secure the aid of foreign capital? It would not be bad, of course, if foreign capital were used under the control of the state and in the interests of the people. Some two dozen new industrial enterprises have come into existence in the country during the four years of independence, but these are, firstly, enterprises mainly of the light and food industries (a "Nescafee" factory, a perfume factory, a transistor factory, etc.) which do not reduce the dependence of the Ivory Coast on foreign capital,



and, secondly, the lion's share of the profits made by these enterprises goes to their owners—the foreign monopolies. The latter export the greater part of their profits, thereby impeding the economic development of the country.

#### **Republic of Dahomey**

*Declaration of Independence.* On the eve of the Referendum on the new French Constitution (September 28, 1958) the local self-government in Dahomey was in the hands of the Progressive Party. The leaders of the party were Sourou Migan Apithy, Hubert Maga, Emile-Derlin Zinsou, and others. At the Referendum the party supported the French Community, but nearly half the electors (45 per cent) preferred to abstain from voting, and some voted against it. Yet most of those who came to the polling stations voted for the Constitution. On December 4, 1958, Dahomey became a Republic and a "member state" of the Community.

Taking the sentiments of the masses into account the Constituent Assembly of Dahomey came out in favour of establishing federal relations with the other members of the Community. In January 1959 representatives of Dahomey took part in negotiations concerning the organisation of the Mali Federation. Soon, however, the Government of Dahomey refused to join the Federation.

The trade unions and other public organisations demanded real independence for the country, but

the disunion of the political forces hampered the struggle against colonialism. The several parties existing in the country were at loggerheads with each other and quickly formed coalitions which just as quickly broke up. These parties and coalitions did not have a clear programme and had but a vague idea of the ultimate aims of the struggle.

In March 1960 the newly formed Party of Nationalists of Dahomey (with Zinsou and Apithy at the head) published a manifesto in which it openly raised the question of Dahomey's independence.

On August 1, 1960, after negotiations with France, Dahomey was proclaimed an independent Republic. As the result of new political combinations the Dahomeyan Party of Unity (P.D.U.) was formed in November 1960 and assumed power. The opposition party (the Dahomeyan Democratic Union—U.D.D.) was disbanded and its leaders were thrown in prison. A one-party system was thus established in Dahomey. Hubert Maga, General Secretary of the P.D.U., was elected the head (President) of the state.

*Political Platform of the P.D.U.* In words the leadership of the P.D.U. advocated a sort of "dynamic socialism". In reality, however, it expressed the interests of bourgeois-nationalist circles who would not even hear of socialism. H. Maga's government did not carry out any radical reforms.

Trying to become popular with the masses it



announced its intentions to develop relations not only with the Western powers, but also with the socialist countries. A Dahomeyan good will mission headed by Sourou Migan Apithy, the Vice-President of the Republic, arrived in Moscow in May 1962. The Soviet and Dahomeyan representatives agreed to establish diplomatic relations and conclude trade and cultural agreements.

*Removal of Hubert Maga.* H. Maga's domestic policy aroused ever greater discontent among the people. The President proclaimed a policy of economy and self-restriction, but pursued this policy only in regard to the working people. The minimum wage was not reconsidered for a period of several years, although prices kept rising. The working people employed in the state-owned sector were regularly docked 10 per cent from their wages for the benefit of the country's budget. The peasantry was also having a hard time of it.

At the same time President Maga and his closest associates lived in luxury. Many prominent officials built costly villas for themselves at the expense of the state.

Enormous sums were being spent by H. Maga's orders on maintaining inflated government machinery.

On October 17, 1963, the leadership of the General Union of Dahomeyan Working People (U.G.T.D.) sent to the National Assembly a letter demanding either an increase in wages or a reduction in prices. The government declined the

demand. Disturbances were in the offing. In the heated atmosphere it was enough to strike a match to cause a conflagration. The journal *La vie africaine* wrote that Dahomey was on the verge of revolution which was barely avoided thanks to the intervention of military units headed by Colonel Soglo, Chief of Staff of the Dahomeyan army.

Led by the trade unions the working people, nevertheless, succeeded in having Maga's government dismissed. A committee to investigate his government's activities was organised. A government formed by Colonel Soglo started functioning November 4, 1963.

The popular actions in October 1963 were conducive to a certain democratisation of the regime. Owing to the insistence of the trade unions the new Constitution of Dahomey, approved by the Referendum on January 5, 1964, included an article prohibiting the use of foreign troops to settle domestic issues. The posts of president and head of the government may now be occupied, in accordance with the Constitution, only by different persons. At the elections of January 19, 1964, Sourou Migan Apithy was elected President of the Republic.

A new Dahomeyan Democratic Party was formed in December 1963, and the P.D.U., which discredited itself in the eyes of the masses, was disbanded.

The programme statements of the party and government leaders lay special stress on the



necessity of improving the conditions of the peasants. They also express a striving to extend economic and cultural relations with socialist countries. Although Dahomey is still greatly dependent on France, prerequisites for lessening this dependence and for pursuing a policy which corresponds to the interests of the country are now arising.

#### **Republic of Upper Volta**

*Declaration of Independence.* Upper Volta is the only country of French West Africa where feudal monarchies still exist. These feudal formations are headed by Moro-Naba ("King of Kings") who has his own court and ministers. But despite all this Moro-Naba is not really independent. At the time of colonialism he was merely a connecting link between the French administration and the enslaved people.

The existence of a strong feudal clique hindered the people of Upper Volta from winning their independence. Owing to the pressure the tribal chiefs brought to bear at the Referendum on September 28, 1958, 99.1 per cent of the electors "voted" for the Community.

Upper Volta remained in the Community, but the French Government could not rely on the "loyalty" of the leaders of the Voltaic Democratic Union (U.D.V.), the ruling party which was a

section of the R.D.A. The colonialists would have preferred to have Moro-Naba, their obedient servant, in power. They incited the "King of Kings" to an armed action. On October 17, 1958, five thousand of Moro-Naba's Kugri warriors armed with bows and arrows and spears surrounded the building of the Territorial Assembly. They tried to disperse the deputies, overthrow the just formed cabinet of Maurice Yaméogo and proclaim a "constitutional monarchy". The French officers, police and gendarmes secretly supported the rebellious "King".

However, Moro-Naba's action excited the people's and, especially, the war veterans' resolute protest. The situation that arose was clearly unfavourable to the rebels. Taking this into account the French authorities refused to help Moro-Naba and pretended to have had nothing to do with the rebellion. Moro-Naba and his adherents had to retreat ignominiously. The colonialists, nevertheless, gave the Volta Government to understand that in case of its disobedience they could find a substitute for it.

On December 11, 1958, Upper Volta acquired the status of a "member state" of the Community. But the semi-independence did not satisfy the masses of the people. The opposition parties and groups became more active, and demands that the country secede from the Community were heard ever more insistently. In their striving to counteract these tendencies the French colonialists made another attempt to stake on the feudal



circles. In September 1959 the feudal lords and chiefs of Upper Volta met in congress and discussed measures to "curb" the progressive elements.

However, these measures were already too late. In Upper Volta, as in many other countries of former French West Africa, the slogan of independence became a nation-wide slogan. On the night of August 5, 1960, Upper Volta was proclaimed an independent Republic. On that night Louis Jacquinot, French Minister without portfolio, handed to Maurice Yaméogo, the President of the country, the symbolic key to the government palace.

The Republic was recognised by many countries. On August 4, 1960, the Government of the Soviet Union solemnly announced its recognition of the young state.

*Economic Course of the Government.* The Voltaic Democratic Union is a conservative nationalist organisation. Its leadership avoids socialist slogans. The Five-Year Plan (1963-67) for the Development of Upper Volta lays stress on private enterprise; it encourages the formation of a national bourgeoisie and extensive activities of foreign monopolies. But this way holds out no prospects. Upper Volta is a poor agrarian country. It has neither a manufacturing nor even a mining industry. The average income per capita is one of the lowest in the world. Actually the country has as yet no national bourgeoisie. It will take scores of years for the incredibly poor over-

whelming majority of the Voltaic population to produce from its midst a stratum of national capitalists. It will take a few more scores of years for these capitalists to get on their feet and be able to undertake the task of developing the national economy.

In the meantime, evidently, the foreign monopolies will exercise their sway over the economy of Upper Volta.

Life itself urges Upper Volta to set up a strong state-owned sector in the country's economy, to organise co-operatives and establish control over the activities of private foreign companies. And it is quite possible to carry such a policy into effect because the Government of Upper Volta occupies a special position in questions of foreign policy. For example, at the 15th Session of the U.N. General Assembly in 1959 Upper Volta voted for the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to the Colonial Countries and Peoples. In the U.N. the representative of Upper Volta championed, together with other African delegates, the defence of the Angola patriots and censured the actions of Verwoerd's racist government in the Republic of South Africa. Unlike the other members of the Afro-Malagasy group, Upper Volta did not allow France to build military bases or to station garrisons on its territory. On February 14, 1961, President Yaméogo stated that Upper Volta would not take part in any system based on joint defence or on defence within the framework of the entire Community.



"Upper Volta", he said, "does not intend to let France have any military bases on its territory, so as not to expose its internal and external security to constant danger by an open or concealed integration in a military bloc."

The attempts of the French Government to bring pressure to bear on Upper Volta were futile. The country categorically refused to sign an agreement on "joint defence" and the French Government had to withdraw its troops from Upper Volta.

#### **Republic of Niger**

*Achievement of Independence.* The proclamation of Niger as an independent state on August 3, 1963, was preceded by a sharp political struggle. The Nigerian Progressive Party (P.P.N.), section of R.D.A., was organised in the country as early as 1946. The party was headed by Hamani Diori—Chairman—and Djibo Bakary—General Secretary. The leadership of the party remained solid until a political scandal broke out in R.D.A. in 1950. The change in the political course of R.D.A. led to a break-up of the Nigerian Progressive Party. Refusing to pursue a course of negotiations with the colonialists Djibo Bakary and his adherents left the Progressive Party and organised a new party—the Nigerian Democratic Union. The anti-colonial programme of the Nigerian Democratic Union won the sympathies and approval of the

masses. The new party was supported by the Nigerian trade unions, which were affiliated with the French General Confederation of Labour, and rapidly increased its membership. In 1956 it united with the Nigerian Bloc of Action and assumed the name of "Sawaba" which in the Houasa language means freedom.

Contrariwise, the influence of the Progressive Party, which advocated co-operation with the colonial administration, diminished with each passing day. This was clearly confirmed by the elections to Niger's Territorial Assembly held in March 1957. Sawaba placed 41 of its representatives in the Assembly, the Progressive Party—only 19. Djibo Bakary, the leader of Sawaba, was empowered to form a government council.

Djibo Bakary and his ministers tried to carry out a number of democratic reforms. For example, they took measures to remove the feudal chiefs who formed the bulwark of the colonialists. However, this met with the strongest resistance of the French administration which supported the tribal chiefs so that most of them managed to hold on.

In July 1958 Sawaba, which by that time had become a section of the Party of African Regrouping (P.R.A.), put forward the slogan of independence for Niger. The leadership of Sawaba, like that of the Democratic Party of Guinea, called upon the electors to reject the draft of the French Constitution at the Referendum of September 28, 1958.



But Sawaba failed, and mainly because it was unable to abolish the institution of chiefs. Acting on the instructions of the French administration the chiefs tampered with the results of the elections. That determined the outcome of the voting. Niger remained in the Community. However, only 37.4 per cent of the electors took part in the elections, and but 25 per cent of those registered in the voters lists voted for the Constitution.

On the basis of the results of the Referendum the Nigerian Progressive Party demanded Djibo Bakary's resignation. The dismissal of Djibo Bakary's government council was followed by elections (in December 1958) to the new Territorial Assembly in which Sawaba secured only six seats, the Progressive Party winning the majority of seats. Subsequently many Sawaba leaders and active members were subjected to repressions, and in October 1959 the party was prohibited altogether.

The general upsurge of the national liberation movement in West Africa could not but influence Niger. The inter-party political strife could not push into the background the people's struggle for complete independence. The status of a "member state" of the Community, which Niger had enjoyed since December 1958, did not satisfy the masses. Taking this into account Hamani Diori's government proclaimed Niger an independent Republic on August 3, 1960, and seceded from the Community.

However, this independence was to a considerable extent merely formal. Like the other members of the Entente Council, Niger signed in April 1961 an agreement on "co-operation" with France in foreign policy, economy, defence, etc. French troops remained in the country, and this curbed the actions of the Nigerian Government.

*Domestic and Foreign Policy.* The declaration of Niger's independence was followed by establishment of a presidential regime and a one-party system. Hamani Diori was elected President on November 9, 1960.

Among the members of the ruling Nigerian Progressive Party there are quite a few peasants, workers and petty employees, but the party rests mainly on feudal and bourgeois circles. Private enterprise is not in any way curtailed.

At the same time, however, in virtue of the objective conditions of economic development, the Nigerian Government is trying to establish control over the foreign monopolies operating in the country. For one thing, the state controls the operations of buying and exporting peanuts.

The programmes of Nigerian economic development envisage organisation of a state-owned sector in economy. True, the opportunities for this are rather few. Niger is an extremely poor country. Of its 3 million people only about 20,000 are workers and employees, the rest are peasants. The primitive farming does not meet the requirements of the population, and part of the necessary foodstuffs is imported.



France, the U.S.A. and other Western powers are taking part in the "development" of the Nigerian economy, but the results of their "aid" are negligible. The Nigerians are beginning to understand that such a one-sided orientation is of no use.

The Nigerian Government has been developing contacts with socialist countries since 1962. A Soviet-Nigerian trade agreement was signed in April 1962. In September of the same year the Soviet Union was visited by a Nigerian good will mission. The visit resulted in the signing of an agreement on cultural co-operation.

Niger is striving to develop regional economic co-operation with neighbouring African countries and has initiated a number of conferences on co-ordinating the plans for industrial development and joint exploitation of the Lake Chad resources. The Nigerian Government has of late been extending its relations with Algeria, U.A.R., Ghana, Guinea and Mali. Friendship with these countries helps to consolidate the country's independence and to enhance its role in the international arena.

#### **Islamic Republic of Mauritania**

*Declaration of Independence.* The population of Mauritania numbers only 750,000, mainly nomads and semi-nomads. The few settled people live only in the valley of the Senegal and in oases.

Mauritania is one of the most backward countries of Africa. For a long time the country did not even have a capital. The Senegalese city of Saint-Louis was considered its capital until July 1957.

Mauritania's political life began in 1947 with the formation of a political group—the Mauritanian Progressive Union—which rested mainly upon tribal chiefs. But this Union actually exerted no influence on the economic and political development of the territory.

The national liberation movement in West Africa also spread to Mauritania. At the time of the Referendum (September 28, 1958) the most influential party in Mauritania was the Party of Mauritanian Regrouping which formed as the result of the amalgamation of the Mauritanian Progressive Union with a small opposition group—the Mauritanian Entente—in May 1958. Moktar Ould Daddah, a lawyer, became the General Secretary of the party. At the same time he held the post of Chairman of the Mauritanian government council.

The Party of Mauritanian Regrouping called on the electors to vote in the Referendum for the Constitution. In response to this appeal the overwhelming majority of the electors voted "yes". On November 28, 1958, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania was proclaimed in the city of Nouakchott which became the capital of the territory. The new Republic remained in the Community. It enjoyed certain autonomy in



domestic affairs, but all its other affairs were administered by French officials.

The subsequent months in the life of the country were characterised by increased political activity. The first Mauritanian Constitution was adopted and elections to the Legislative Assembly were held. In these elections the Party of Mauritanian Regrouping once again showed itself the chief political force in the country by winning all the 40 seats.

In May 1959 a number of leaders left this party and formed the Mauritanian National Union. The new group demanded a better understanding between Mauritania and the West African countries, especially the Mali Federation.

During this period a one-party system was established in Mauritania. The Party of Mauritanian National Revival (Nahda) which advocated Mauritania's union with Morocco was prohibited in 1960. The Mauritanian National Union agreed to forming a united front with the ruling party. The Union of Mauritanian Moslem Socialists expressing the interests of the chiefs of Adrar Region also came to an understanding with the ruling party.

This process was consummated after Mauritania had been proclaimed an independent state. Following the example of the other West African countries Mauritania asked Paris for complete independence. The French Government had to acquiesce. Gun volleys heralding the birth of a new independent state in Africa were fired in

Nouakchott on November 28, 1960. Moktar Ould Daddah was elected President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

A Unity Congress at which all the country's political parties and trends were represented was held in Nouakchott, the capital of Mauritania, in December 1961. The participants of the Congress adopted a resolution to form a Party of the Mauritanian People (P.P.M.).

But because of the existence of strong feudal and tribal survivals the broad masses of Mauritians exert but little influence on the course of events. Traditional chiefs dominate in Mauritania as in no other West African country, and it is precisely they who have always solved, primarily on the basis of their own interests, all the most important problems connected with the establishment and development of the Mauritanian state.

*Rapacious Exploitation of the Natural Resources.* The greater part of Mauritania is a dry, sun-parched desert and semi-desert. And yet this barren land is coveted by French and other imperialists. The "agreements on co-operation" concluded between France and Mauritania in June 1961 enable France to control the armed forces, economy and finances, and to "co-ordinate" the foreign policy of the young state.

This "attention" of French imperialism to Mauritania is due primarily to the country's strategic position. The French troops stationed there may threaten Morocco, Algeria, Mali and Senegal.



Another reason for this "attention" is Mauritania's natural resources. Since World War II its territory has been found to have very rich iron and copper deposits. The industrial resources of high-quality iron ores near Fort-Gouraud are estimated at 125 million tons (the ores contain 65-68 per cent metal). There are also deposits of many hundreds of millions of tons of poorer ores. Copper ores have been discovered in the vicinity of the city of Akjoujt. These deposits can be worked by open-cast mining.

A company for working the iron ore deposit—MIFERMA (Société Anonyme des Mines de Fer de Mauritanie)—was organised as far back as 1952. British, French, West German and Italian monopolies are its shareholders. The bigwigs of the company let the Mauritanian Government have 5 per cent of the shares to create the impression of "joint exploitation" of this deposit.

The entire complex of MIFERMA's iron-ore enterprises—mines, railway connecting Fort-Gouraud with Port-Etienne, port structures, etc., were put into operation in June 1964. Mauritania thus became one of the major exporters of iron ore on the African continent. Fort-Gouraud is to produce 4.5 million tons of ore already in 1964. Subsequently the output will be increased to 6 million tons. All ores are exported to Europe.

At first sight it would seem that Mauritania has a good deal to profit from MIFERMA's exploitation of the deposits in Fort-Gouraud. According to the terms of the contract Mauritania

receives half the profits from the sales of iron ore. In reality, however, this share is much smaller. A considerable part of Mauritania's profits is spent on covering the transportation costs, insurance, etc. The hopes that MIFERMA will become the "basis of Mauritania's economic prosperity" are illusory. Reporting the intentions of the Mauritanian President to demand from MIFERMA assistance in the matter of developing the national economy, the English journal *Statist* pointed out that MIFERMA is inclined to take care of its own business and has no desire to become a hired company in the middle of the 20th century. It is really hard to expect a private monopoly to display any concern for the interests of the country in which it is operating, for any country attracts it only by high profits and opportunities for rapid enrichment.

The Mauritians are becoming convinced of this themselves. A striving to put an end to the one-sided Western orientation and to establish relations with the socialist powers is growing in the country. This is in part attested by the visit of the Mauritanian good will mission to the Soviet Union in July 1964.



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Chapter 5

**MOVEMENT  
OF WEST  
AFRICAN  
COUNTRIES  
FOR UNITY**

One of the aims of the 1956 "Limitation Law" was to break up F.W.A. (French West Africa) into small state formations. The colonialists reckoned, and not without reason, that it should be much easier for them to keep under control small republics than one large state.

In response to this forced dismemberment a movement for unity and the formation of an independent and indivisible West African Republic came into existence in former F.W.A. This movement materialised in the formation of the Mali Federation (1959-60). Originally Senegal, the Sudanese Republic, Upper Volta and Dahomey intended to participate in it, but under the pressure of colonialists the two latter countries had to relinquish their intentions. Formed by Senegal and Sudan the Mali Federation did not exist very long, however, and broke up in August 1960.

The failure did not discourage the advocates of West African and African unity. They continued their struggle, for it corresponded to the deepest,

innermost interests of the African people. "The strategy of the movement of liberation of our continent," said Modibo Keita, the President of Mali, "required, above all, the restoration of this unity."<sup>\*</sup>

The next step in this direction was the formation of the Union of African States. Its foundation had been laid as early as November 1958 by Ghana and Guinea. In December 1960 they were joined by the Mali Republic. The members of the Union considered an intensification of the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism in Africa their main task. The intrigues of the imperialists prevented the Union from becoming a broader organisation.

The idea of unity was further developed by the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (O.A.U.). This question was considered at the conference of heads of states and governments of independent African countries in Addis Ababa in May 1963. However, not all West African countries are in favour of this proposal as yet. The members of the Afro-Malagasy Union made various reservations concerning the unity of action of the young states and emphasised in every possible way their own special "Afro-Malagasy interests".

The Organisation of African Unity was formed, nevertheless. Participation in it helped to bring all African states, including the West African countries, closer to each other and strengthened

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<sup>\*</sup> *L'Essor*, May 26, 1964, p. 3.



their positions in the face of imperialism and neocolonialism.

As President Modibo Keita noted, in "Addis Ababa the heads of African states raised, by their decisions, the general crisis of the reactionary system to the highest degree, aggravating and increasing the contradictions of big capital on the African soil". Africa declared for all to hear that it would make its own history.

Achievement of closer unity very largely depends on the course the young states will pursue. Let us imagine that the independent countries are ruled by the bourgeoisie. Will it be able to overlook its differences for the sake of some common African aim? Hardly. Under capitalism there is only one method of achieving "unity", and that is domination of weak countries by stronger countries. But it goes without saying that the peoples will not consent to such unification.

It will be different if the countries choose the socialist way. Localism and national strife are alien to socialism. This is not hard to see in the example of the Soviet Union where more than 100 nations and nationalities are living as one friendly family united by common interests and a common aim.

Even so sharp a problem as borders has lost its importance in the Soviet Union. For example, in 1954 the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet passed a resolution to transfer the Crimean Region, formerly a

constituent part of the R.S.F.S.R., to the Ukraine. It seems incredible that so strong a republic as the R.S.F.S.R. should willingly cede part of its rich territory to another republic. But this is a fact, and in the Soviet Union it is not an exception.

Unification of the African countries on progressive principles offers promising prospects.



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Chapter 6

**STRUGGLE  
FOR PEACE  
AND  
DISARMAMENT**

The problems of war and peace are of paramount importance to the Africans, for it is impossible to develop the economy, raise the living standards and build a new life when guns are firing and bombs are exploding.

Africa is actively participating in the struggle for peace. This struggle assumes various forms. The struggle against colonialism and imperialism is part of the struggle for world peace since liquidation of imperialism and colonialism means elimination of the main cause of war. By fighting the Portuguese colonialists in Angola or exposing the manifestations of economic colonialism the Africans are contributing to the cause of peace.

Guided by the same sentiments the African countries unanimously supported the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to the Colonial Countries and Peoples proposed by the Soviet Union at the 15th Session of the U.N. General Assembly at the end of 1960. Since the adoption of this historical document the colonialists find it

much more difficult to retain their positions on the African continent and to justify the plunder and exploitation of the peoples under their domination.

Nor do the African countries relax their attention to the problem of disarmament. Some states are now in possession of monstrous instruments of destruction. In the event of war Africa would also be caught up in its devastating fire. That is why peace-loving countries are interested in disarmament and maintenance of peace.

Disarmament also has another aspect. Everybody knows that in the Republic of South Africa, as well as in Angola and many other dependent territories, the colonialists are shedding the blood of courageous patriots. To deprive them of arms would facilitate the victory of the oppressed peoples in their just struggle. It stands to reason that the struggle for peace and disarmament can not imply disarmament of the peoples fighting for their independence. It implies disarmament of the already independent great and small countries.

The African countries are interested in disarmament also for economic reasons. The world annually throws more than 120,000 million dollars into the furnace of war preparations. If instead of producing instruments of death this money were used for constructive purposes, it would be possible to effect a fundamental technical and economic reconstruction of the entire African continent.



It is as yet impossible to solve the disarmament problem. The solution of this problem is hindered primarily by the aggressive Western circles which advocate a "policy of strength" also in regard to the peoples fighting for their independence. That is why in the struggle for disarmament it is important to unite the efforts of all peace-loving countries, the socialist states and the countries which have freed themselves from colonial dependence in the first place.

This unity of action is already being carried into life and is bearing fruit. Under the pressure of world public opinion the governments of the U.S.A. and Great Britain had to sign with the Soviet Union (in Moscow on August 5, 1963) a Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water. Of course, this Treaty does not solve the entire problem of disarmament, but it is a very important step forward to general liquidation of the means of mass annihilation, a step toward victory of the forces of peace all over the world. Hailing the Moscow Test Ban Treaty President Modibo Keita noted the importance "of all partial solutions in the sphere of disarmament".\* He expressed the hope that a "patient accumulation of similar solutions would lead to a final settlement of this vital problem".

Expressing the sentiments of the overwhelming majority of Africans, the Conference of Ministers

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\* *Pravda*, July 25, 1963.

of Foreign Affairs of the O.A.U. held in August 1963 urged the states to subscribe to this Treaty. Almost all West African countries responded to this wise appeal. The Moscow Treaty offers the Africans greater promises in their struggle for discontinuance of nuclear tests in Africa, transformation of the continent into an atom-free zone and liquidation of foreign military bases on African soil.

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What does the history of the national liberation movement in West Africa suggest?

1. First of all it suggests that the masses of the people are invincible. The savagely oppressed peoples deprived of any rights were able to muster sufficient strength and throw off the hated colonial yoke. It is important to emphasise that not one of the West African countries achieved its independence without a struggle. The Africans had fought against the seizure of their lands by colonialists and against imperialist dominion and, lastly, for political independence. The fact that in the West African countries the power was transferred to Africans relatively peacefully does not in any way attest the kindness of colonialists. The latter had to do it.

Retreating under the blows of the oppressed peoples the colonialists do not intend to desert the battlefield—the African soil. By retaining the key positions in the economy of the liberated



countries the imperialists mean to dominate Africa, plunder its riches and exploit its people in new forms and by new methods.

2. The history of the national liberation movement and the comparatively brief existence of the West African states warrant the assumption that these plans of the imperialists will also be disclosed and foiled by the peoples of Africa.

Having achieved political independence the young countries are beginning to attack problems of the second stage of the national liberation struggle, namely, the winning of economic independence and raising the living standards. Enormous difficulties will have to be surmounted during this stage. Economic independence is unthinkable without a sufficiently high level of economic development. Each country must develop a modern national industry and considerably increase the productivity of its agriculture. The movement toward economic independence also presupposes gradual renouncement of the predatory "services" of foreign monopolies which impoverish the country.

The African countries can solve all these complicated problems only by embarking on the path which leads to socialism. The alternative before the young African states is:

either, by using socialist methods of economy, to develop in a short period of time a strong state-owned sector in industry, organise the peasants in producers' co-operatives, place the

finances and the sphere of circulation under state control and, escaping from imperialist bondage, build a prosperous socialist state;

or to entrust the matter of economic development to private foreign and national capital which, proceeding from its own mercenary interests, turns primarily to development of the raw material branches of the economy from which it profits the most. In this case the dependence of the young states on foreign countries not only fails to diminish, but, on the contrary, increases, and their independence becomes largely a matter of mere formality.

Some West African countries—Mali, Guinea—are already carrying out some measures of a socialist character. In the course of their development they are being greatly assisted by the socialist states, the Soviet Union in the first place.

3. The history of the struggle of the African peoples for freedom shows that they will be able to retain and consolidate the achieved independence provided they are united and oppose their joint efforts to the collective actions of the imperialists. Anti-imperialist and anti-colonial unity of the African peoples is the guarantee of a successful solution of the problems of the second stage of the national liberation revolution.

4. Lastly, as historical experience attests, Africa needs peace. Under conditions of peace and peaceful coexistence of the two systems the Africans succeeded, with the aid of the socialist states and in a short period of time, in smashing



the colonial system on the greater part of the continent. They need peace in order that they may build, create and lay down the foundations for their better future.

Such are the most important conclusions that can be drawn from the struggle of the peoples of West Africa for their liberation.

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